

お菓子職人の 成り上がり

Novel Tsukiyo Rui Ill Miya Kazutomo

天才パティシエの
領地経営

ill. 三弥カズトモ
月夜涙

2



Upstart Pastry Chef

– Territory Management of a Genius Pâtisserie –

- Volume 2 - New Love and Light Snow Silk Crepe

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[Isecai Translation]

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ティナ

見たことがない果物が

「あつ、あつちには

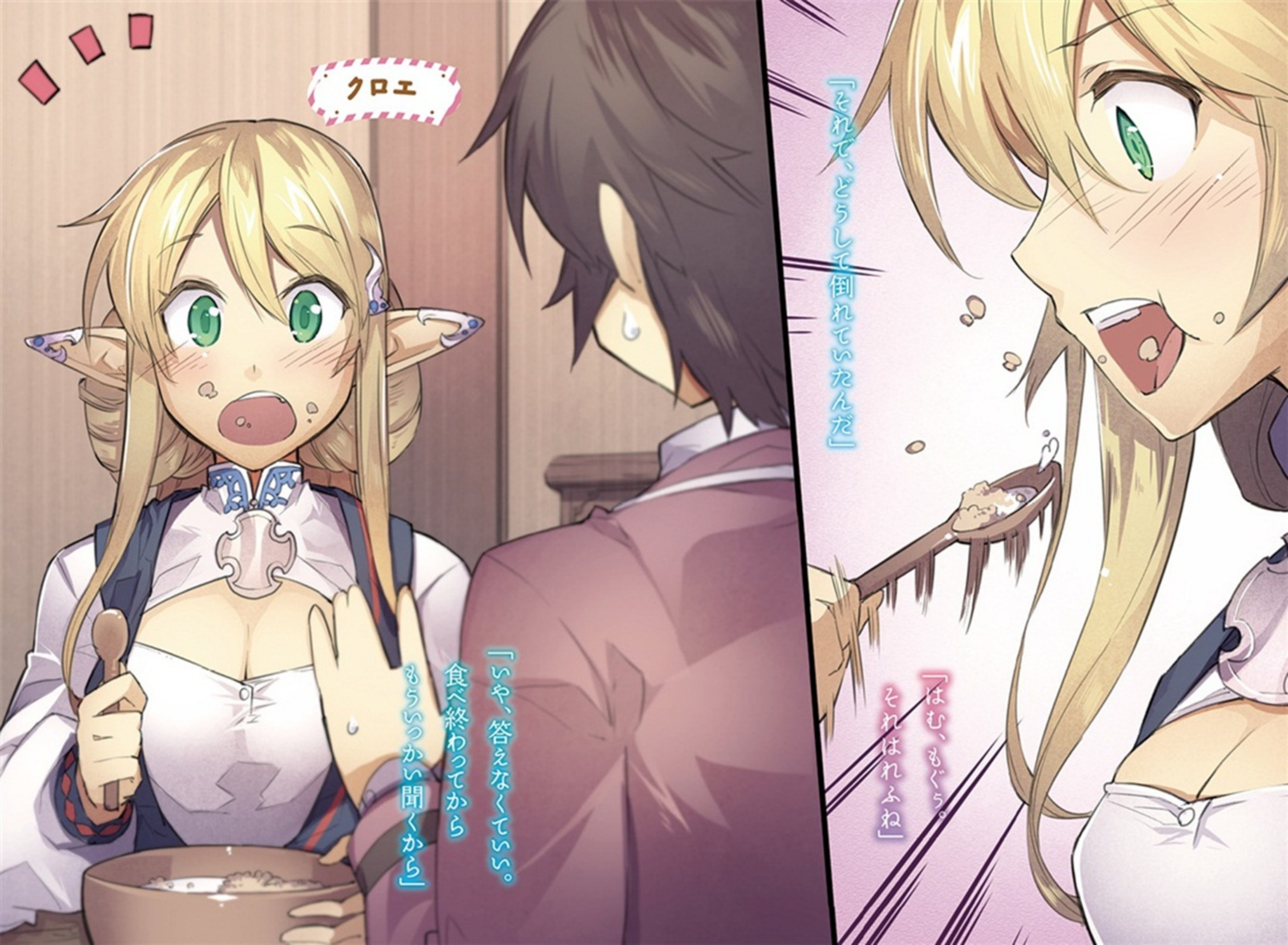
「うわあ、あのお店に並んでいるの
海のお魚らしいですよ」

クルト・アルノルト

「そろそろ、
このパーティの
主賓を紹介しよう。
壇上に来てくれないか、
クルトくん、ファルノ」

アルフレート・フェルナンデ

ファルノ・フェルナンデ



クロエ

「いや、答えなくていい。
食べ終わってから
もういっかい聞くから」

「それで、どうして倒れていたんだ」

「はむ、もぐら。
それはれふね」

「明日が
待ち遠しいよー!」

「早く食べたい
です!」



Prologue

Brand New Daily Life

After my engagement with Faruno was decided, I slept overnight at the Arnold's mansion, then returned to my village.

Though it was an engagement, Faruno made her own preparations separately by returning to Marquisate of Fernandes.

The villagers greeted me excitedly when I arrived. They already knew that I was the next feudal lord... The group of villagers who returned earlier must have told them somehow.

I go back to my house once to change clothes, then head out again. There's a very important job to do today.

"Uwaa, there are so many chickens!" Tina's eyes sparkle.

In front of her, two carriages arranged by Marquis Fernandes are lined up. One by one, the chickens are carried through trays over to the sheds I've prepared for them. Yes, the chickens I've been waiting for have finally arrived. Finally, I've obtained one of the most important ingredients as a pastry chef: the eggs!

"Not only the quantity, the quality is also great. I've expected this the moment I laid my eyes on the eggs, but these chickens are indeed great."

I'm observing the chickens; they look healthy and young. Surely, they'll lay a lot of great eggs. I bow deeply towards Marquis Fernandes.

"Yes, these chickens are good. They're big and plump, they look so tender... Gulps."

Tina's drool is dripping.

It's as if she has entered her fighting mode; her fluffy tail points up rigidly and her fox ears twitches non-stop. Even now, she looks ready to jump at the chickens anytime.

“Tina, you can’t eat them, you know?”

“Wh-what are you talking about? There’s no way I’m... going to do that.” Looking shaken, Tina replies to me. She subtly turns her face away; she’s so easy to understand.

“There’s no need to hurry; we’ll have the chance to eat them soon. For now, more than collecting the eggs, our priority is to increase their numbers. We only need to leave a few roosters behind; our meals will get more lavish soon.”

I received around fifty chickens, but that number is far from enough. In order to distribute the chickens to each village, I should treat the eggs as a precious commodity. For now, I’m determined to focus on increasing their numbers.

The eggs should be left alone aside of a celebration.

“Chicken meat! *Uwaa*, should we grill them, or make some stew, or... whatever it is, I’m looking forward to it!” The chicks haven’t even hatched, but Tina is already thinking about how to cook them in the future.

I understand her feelings, though. Around here, the only meat we can eat is game meat that comes from hunting wild boars, deer, or ducks. Those are tasty, but the deliciousness of a domesticated source will be different for sure. Moreover, my heart throbs in excitement when I think of how there will be a steady supply of meat, which is a huge relief.

“Yes, I’m looking forward just as much. Or maybe even more, if I think about Tina’s cooking.” I’m brushing Tina’s head unconsciously. Her fluffy hair and ears feel really good.

After a while of that, Tina grips my hem hard.

While wondering what she’s thinking, I’m looking at her, then at the carriage that doesn’t unload any chickens. Instead of chickens, there are piles of lumber and bricks. I’ve been speculating on their purpose for a while now.

“It seems that Faruno-sama’s engagement with Kurt-sama is true.” Somewhere, Tina mumbles solemnly.

“It seems so.”

There are several carpenters who have been working energetically for a while now. The stuff dropped from that carriage are a house's materials. Somehow, they are bringing materials from a disassembled house, to assemble it again. That's the method to shorten the assembling process.

It seems that the completed house will be a terribly extravagant one.

The house they are building right now will be inhabited by Faruno and her servants. No matter how much I've verbally promised not to lay my hands on her, no one will be able to believe that if we live in the same house. Therefore, Marquis Fernandes is building a house in my village and sending some servants to Faruno for monitoring.

I'm surprised that Marquis Fernandes will go as far as building a house for the sake of the engagement. It seems that Faruno will come to this village when the house is completed. Two weeks after that, I will announce my betrothal to Faruno and go to Marquis Fernandes' house to make the pastry for the duchess. The details should be discussed at that time.

I have to think of a pastry recipe.

The duchess is a woman who likes roses. Since I've told my plans to make cookies that will enliven the beauty and fragrant of roses for a long time, Marquis Fernandes will arrange the ingredients for me. Right now, I'm thinking about the plan to improve it.

"Still, it's amazing how easy it looks like to build a house."

"That's because he's a marquis. He's only third in the court after the Emperor; of course he can go to this extent."

That is the marquis' status. It's not something that a baronetcy's inheritance, one that barely qualifies to enter the court rank like the Arnolds, could even compare to. It's sufficient to say that they're like existences above the clouds. The only ones whose status stand beyond it are the imperial family and the ducal house.

"Kurt-sama is amazing, to be able to catch the attention of the daughter of that man." Tina sounds proud when she says that, but she can't hide the sadness and loneliness behind those words. She must have thought that I will be taken away.

I wrap my arm around her shoulders.

“Tina, sorry. I wanted to refuse that engagement. I know it’ll make you sad... However, my position doesn’t allow that. I know it’s unfair to you.”

“That, I won’t dare to say that kind of thing. My position and Kurt-sama’s are already different from the start.” Tina’s voice sounds sorrowful.

It’s common sense for a noble to build connections with other nobles. There’s also the tendency to avoid marriage with a beastman like Tina.

I happen to think that it’s such bullshit. I can stay with Tina. I won’t make her sad. That is more important to me than anything. Because Tina was here, I didn’t abandon my dreams. Because she was here, I worked hard to reach this place. I wish I can stay with her from now on too.

“Your feelings are enough. Kurt-sama, please think of what will make you the happiest. That will make me the happiest too.” Tina removes herself.

“Tina, I... All right. I’m going to think about my own happiness.”

Tina nods.

She must have misunderstood somehow. My happiness is to bring her joy. I replied like that, because no matter how much I tried to reach out to her, she only responded in words. I have to think of the best way to stay with her.



After I received all the chickens, I entered the chicken shed and discreetly used ^{Heal}Recovery on one of them.

If they were only that many, the sick and injured chickens would mingle together. They might also produce worn-out chicks in the long-term.

^{Heal}My Recovery is effective for non-humans too.

When I used it on wheat before, I was shocked when the wilted wheat was revived. By using ^{Heal}Recovery, I was expecting them to grow into healthier chickens as they mature.

But then, a tiny mischievous thought sprouted in my mind. If the target is human, I can enable them to use mana once I heal their mana-producing organ. I had been thinking for a while about whether or not a non-human could also use magic.

I looked at the chickens with my all-seeing eyes, the side effect of ^{Heal}Recovery.

^{Heal}Recovery is the power that can return something to its normal condition. Therefore, I must first know what the normal condition constitutes. That's how I gained this ability to see through everything with my eyes.

"As I thought, they have it."

The chickens also have a mana-producing organ. It was naturally unusable since it was damaged, but I could heal it. If the chickens can use mana, maybe they will lay more eggs.

^{Heal}
[Recovery].

It's not like I don't have any bad feelings, but the temptation is too big. I cast ^{Heal}Recovery on the weakest-looking chicken. It was not only sick, it also crashed into something when being carried over, resulting in one broken leg. Dying was the only thing left for that one.

"Cluck, cluck, cluckawk, cluckawk!"

The healed chicken jumped. And then, it rushed out straight to the wall with mana in its whole body, smashed through the wall, and escaped. Just like that, it ran out of the village and disappeared into the forest.

"And there it goes. Of course."

If it can escape, it will. Let's avoid granting the chickens the ability to use mana next time.

From then, I manually collected the eggs by scanning the shed and returned to the house. If I left them lying around, they'll get spoiled. Of course, there won't be any chicks hatching from them either.

Let's include these eggs in today's meal. I'm sure Tina will be happy to eat some egg dishes.

Chapter 1

Faruno's Butler

After seeing off the mana-wielding chicken's escape into the forest, I returned back to the house. Just before I arrive, I stop walking.

"Who's that with Tina?"

In front of the door, Tina is talking to someone. Albeit slender, that man has a toned body. He's wearing a butler's uniform, but he looks more like a soldier than a servant.

"I am called Volg. Starting from today, I will be aiding this village. As the next feudal lord of the Arnold baronetcy, as well as the head of this village, I've come to pay my respects to Kurt Arnold-sama. This is an introduction letter from Marquis Fernandes."

He has a courteous bearing. He looks well-mannered too. He's an extraordinary man. However, he emits an unusual pressure that causes Tina to look frightened. She looks pitiful with her ears stuck flat to her head; even her tail's fur curls up.

"That, Kurt-sama, is currently not available."

"When will he return to this place, if I may ask?"

"That's, I don't know."

"Very well, then. May I wait inside the house? I have something from my lady for Kurt-sama."

"That is, uhm..."

"Could you please respond firmly?"

Surprised, Tina shrinks.

She's probably afraid to be left alone with that man inside the house. Yet, considering the standpoint of the other party, there's no way she could refuse. Being cornered to

that extent, Tina's eyes start welling up. I hurry over to their place.

"I'm sorry for being late."

"Kurt-sama!"

The moment I show up, Tina smiles in relief at me before hiding behind my back. I wryly smile. From now on, there will be more circumstances where she has to meet a lot of strangers. I have to fix her shyness.

Looking at my expression, the man in butler uniform starts to speak.

"May I confirm that you are indeed Kurt Arnold-sama?"

"Yes, I'm Kurt Arnold. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance."

"I'm honored. My name is Volg. As a commoner, I do not have a surname."

After introducing himself up to that point, Volg gives me a grin. "Then, Kurt-sama. It's not necessary to use polite speech with me, as I am but a mere servant. Before long, you will become a baronet, the husband of my employer." He then bows to me.

I don't receive that kind of treatment very often. It feels slightly embarrassing.

"Understood. I'll just use casual speech. To have you come here and greet me, it's my bad."

"No, it is mine. I am terribly sorry for intruding at this kind of hour. In the future, I will become Kurt-sama's contact person. If you have a need that requires all of us, please give your instruction to me."

"Understood, let's do it that way. Having you here itself is something I've heard from Marquis Fernandes."

"I appreciate it, Kurt-sama." After saying that, Volg inspects me from head to toe with his eyes.

The look in his eyes reminds me of a blood-boiling beast.

"...*Hou*, when I was told by Faruno-sama, I thought it was fake, but this is indeed a fine

warrior. My blood is seething.”

I am hit by a dreadful fighting spirit from Volg. Behind me, Tina isn’t someone who can endure this. She’s clinging onto me.

“Ah, my mistake. It is my bad habit. When seeing someone like you, my blood is excited like the old times.” Volg bows down with a gentle smile. The fighting spirit that he emitted just now has completely disappeared.

“Oh, no, that’s, I’m really sorry to feel frightened. It’s my mistake. Even though I’m Kurt-sama’s servant, I can’t respond properly.” Tina also bows her head in response. Her wariness towards the male in front of her has lessened. It must be because his true nature is that of kindness.

“Please accept my apology as well. My servant was impolite.”

Everyone in this spot is bowing now. When I look up, my eyes meet with Volg’s. This is a mutually awkward situation, so we laugh together.

“No, I’m already used to be feared by girls and children. I wasn’t considerate enough... Well, prolonging our apologies will waste our time. If this incident can be put behind us, I’ll be truly grateful.”

“You said it. I am the one who should be grateful. It will be dinner time soon, shall we eat dinner together in my place while having our discussion?”

“I am only a servant. I won’t be forgiven to eat at the same table as Kurt-sama who will soon become a noble.”

“That rule is applied to your territory. At least, in my village, there’s no such thing. If we gather at the same dining table, we can reach a mutual understanding in peace. From now on, we’ll be acquainted for a long time. I want us to take our time and speak without any reserve.”

Just as Volg, who wishes to speak with me, I also want to know Marquis Fernandes’ and Faruno’s expectations from Volg, even though it may not be much.

“I understand. That is indeed a good reason. Let us partake in it.”

Tina grabs the hem of my shirt tightly. When I see her making that kind of face, she

nods with teary eyes. It seems that she has also found her resolution.

“Young lady, you don’t need to look so cautious.” At the opposite of Tina, Volg smiles.

“Ah, uhm, yes.” Tina vaguely replies without understanding his intention.

“I have no desire to attack you whatsoever, because I have no interest in women.”

Tina’s neck is tilting to the side, but anyway, for the time being, she looks relieved. On the other hand, it’s my turn to feel warier...

In any case, let’s just get inside. The talk shall begin after that.

“Come inside. It’s small, but I hope it suits your taste.” With that, I invited another fief’s member to my house for the first time.



“It’s modest, but it’s been maintained attentively. It’s a nice home.” When Volg gets across the living room, he speaks in admiration.

“That is thanks to our Tina here. She does her job carefully and accurately.”

Tina’s house cleaning skills are extraordinarily high. It’s the result of her doing everything continuously without even once slacking off in her duties. She’s not even doing it repetitively, since she doesn’t forget to use her creativity.

“It’s a job so well done that the servants in my place should see this too.” Volg laughs in crackles.

“Why are you in this village? If you are Faruno-sama’s butler, shouldn’t you come with her, usually?”

“I have a reason for that. I must observe the assembling of the lady’s residing place so there would be no negligence nor compromise. As long as I am here, we can build her the best residence... Moreover, I can use mana. Just one of me can cover more than a dozen people’s work.”

“I see. Even at a glance, you don’t look like a simple butler either. Are you also Faruno-sama’s guardian?”

“Indeed I am. However, I have entrusted that role to my subordinate. Moreover, my task here cannot be entrusted to anyone else. I was personally designated by Marquis Fernandes himself, because he expected things to go smoothly with me as your intermediary.”

The truth is, I’ve realized since I looked at him from a distance that this man has strong mana. I’ve never even seen anyone who has mana as strong as him. Most likely, we are at the same level.

In that case, he can do much heavier duties. My all-seeing eyes have also told me that this man has an advanced Ability. Not only an Ability, he also has a deep understanding in martial arts. Even just by standing casually, I can’t see any weak points on him.

“I understand. I’m going to cook our meals now, please wait in that room over there.”

“I have heard from my lady that making pastries is your strong point, but to think that you’re also dabbling in cooking... The truth is, I’m looking forward to the taste of the food that has made my master and young lady to groan in admiration.”

“Then I’ll put my effort to reach your expectations.” I smile and walk towards the kitchen.



“Tina, I’m going to cook now, so could you please make some tea? After bringing the tea for him, I wish you’d entertain him with some small talk.”

“Ye-yes, Kurt-sama.” Tina nods, but her face is frozen. Even though she understands that Volg isn’t a bad person, she still instinctively cowers.

However, this is the part where I have to steel my heart. In order to fix her shyness of strangers, this will be good training for her.

“Now, it’s rude to make him wait. Let’s fix something up really quickly.”

I’m wondering about the recipe. There’s no bread ready. If I’m to bake bread right now, it will take too much time. There won’t be bread for our staple food tonight, but some simpler substitution. In that case, so that it won’t take too long, something easy to make like crepes. I still have wheat flour and yams, so I can make it, somehow. And last, the main dish... to fit them...

“Ah, I have that, right?”

From the racks, the ingredient that I take out is the bacon, made from the deluxe end-of-autumn wild boar ribs. It’s a thick meat densely packed with fat. Marinated in special deluxe *tare* sauce, it’s a rare beauty, smoked with maple wood chips. I saved it in hiding as a treat for special occasions.

It will be lonely to present it alone, so let’s use the eggs that I need to get rid of today. The garnish is the excessive cabbage in my stash.

Since I have these, I can make *that*. It’ll be good if it suits his taste.

I lit the fire in the stove while thinking so.

Chapter 2

An Ordinary Treat

I'm going to cook dinner in the kitchen. The frying pan is already being heated up.

While heating up the frying pan, I put together wheat flour, yam, salt, water, and walnut oil in a bowl, then begin kneading it. In this arrangement, I've also added chopped alpine leek's leaves that I obtained from the mountain. The alpine leek is a potherb. Using it this way will add aroma and strengthen the flavor. I let it rest for a while. Once I roast it in frying pan instead of the oven, it will turn into bing.

Bing is a flat bread specialty in Chinese cuisine. Popularly paired with Peking duck skin, it can be made in a short time.

"Now then, while the dough is resting, I must cook the main dish."

My prided bacon marinated in deluxe *tare* sauce and smoked with maple wood chips is sliced into generous thick slices. Bacon is tastier when cut into thick slices.

Without putting oil, I put the slices into the hot frying pan. It emits a sizzling sound and the savory aroma from the fat, as well as the scent of maple wood chips that was used to smoke the bacon. It's the meat full with fat, after all. Even if I don't use oil, the fat oil oozing out from the bacon itself is enough. With the overflowing oil, the bacon is deep fried.

This is the correct way to cook crispy bacon. By doing it this way, the bacon won't taste bitter. The bacon's fat becomes translucent. Right now, the next thing is to crack some eggs on top of the bacon.



What I am cooking is bacon egg. It's extremely simple, but it tastes so good. There's no way it won't be tasty; it's made from the deluxe bacon plus freshly laid eggs from this morning, after all.

"I have to cover it."

I'm covering the frying pan. Like this, convection will occur, cooking it through covered pan roasting. The egg yolk is tastier when warm. I want to flip it over, but there's bacon beneath them. If I flip it, the egg yolk will be smashed. So I just cook one side.

When I uncover the lid after estimating the suitable time, some smoke blew out of it. The egg white is firm, while the egg yolk is half-done. It's the ideal sunny-side up egg.

"*Yosh yosh*, the meat juice and fat oil are plenty."

From the thick slices of bacon, a generous amount of meat juice and oil oozes out. Half of that oil is moved into a container. I lick a little of it. Salt and *tare* sauce used when making the bacon are mixed together with the taste of meat juice and oil. Just those should have guaranteed the deliciousness of this dish.

Then I add honey, vinegar, and salt together, as well as fruit juice from lingonberry making a sweet and sour sauce. I will also properly use the leftover oil and meat juice in the frying pan.

"I wonder if the bing dough I kneaded earlier has rested enough."

I press the dough into a round flat shape. Then, the flattened dough is put on top of the frying pan, thus being deep fried by the wild boar fat oil. By doing this, I can cook a crispy bing. Not only that, the remaining wild boar fat oil and meat juice are being absorbed by the dough, making it remarkably delicious. The part untouched by the oil will become fluffy and tender. Before long, the bing is cooked.

"Lastly, the finishing touch."

Stacking the bacon egg on the bing, I also put the finely sliced cabbage on top of them. Lastly, I'm pouring the seasoning that uses meat juice and oil, completely covering them. I'm being careful to avoid spilling the egg yolk and sauce.

With this, it's completed. It's jianbing-wrapped bacon egg. If I had some spices, I could make it more delicious, though...

I'm heating up the meat soup that Tina made for lunch to be the accompaniment. There are only two dishes, but these should be enough.



"I've made you wait. Here comes our dinner today."

On a large plate, I placed three bacon-egg with bing wraps before going to the living room.

"Kurt-sama, I'll bring the rest of it."

"I'll leave that to you."

Tina rushes into the kitchen. When I look back, she's already putting smaller plates and the soup that I've reheated into a tray. She's good, as expected. She can predict my intentions and move accordingly.

"*Hou*, so this is Kurt-sama's cooking. I've been smelling cooked meat for a while, making me feel hungry."

"Please excuse us for only having this modest dish."

"I am only an old servant; I do not wish for fanciful dishes. I do have high expectations for the taste, though."

"If it's that, there's no worry. I can guarantee the taste."

Volg and I look at each other's faces, then grin. Tina has finally returned with the tray. The soup and small plates are arranged on the table.

"Well then, let's eat before it gets cold. This is the most delicious when it's still hot."

"Then, it is better if we eat right at this moment, isn't it? There's no reason for us to waste Kurt-sama's cooking."

We sit in different chairs. Volg doesn't seem to mind eating from the same table as Tina. It looks like he has accepted the custom that I told him before.

""We thank the God and the forest for the food we have today."" Our voices blend

together as we offer our prayers before eating. Then, the dinner begins.

“Kurt-sama. There’s no knife or fork. How do you suggest we eat this?” Volg asks while looking perplexed.

He previously said that he came from common origins, which shows up in his occasional rough verbal expressions. However, from time to time, I can feel an unmasked elegance from him. This is only my speculation, but I suspect that he was born in a noble family and forced to become a commoner because he didn’t inherit the title.

“In this village, we don’t eat in a refined manner. Just sink your teeth into it like this.” I bite into the bing-wrapped bacon egg wrap that I’ve taken.

“So it’s like that. Thank you for your guidance. The last time I ate that way was on the battlefield. My heart is beating since it’s really strange. Well then.” While showing a slight hesitation, Volg also bites into my cooking. “This is?! How could it!?”

It only took a second from that, but he starts wolfing down the food without minding any courtesy. He even licks off the sauce that drips to his hand cleanly in a bad manner. Then, after he finishes eating, he draws out a long sigh and looks dazed.

“That was amazing. It was terribly delicious. It made me forget myself.”

“I am very glad that you are happy with it.”

When I looked to my side, Tina was also frantically munching on the jianbing-wrapped bacon egg with her small mouth. She looks seriously cute.

“I’ve smelled something like spring onion even before eating, but the moment it entered my mouth, I was instantly overwhelmed with the taste of meat and the sweet and sour sauce, the taste of meat juice and egg yolk kept bombarding my taste buds, and it met with the sauce once again. The texture was also terribly interesting, with the crispiness on the outside and the fluffy tenderness on the inside, there was no hope for me to stop eating.”

The bing wrap’s purpose is to trap the aroma and meat juice inside. Thanks to the tightly wrapped bacon egg and sauce, the moment it is bitten for the first time, the aroma instantly spreads. It was the so-called explosion of aroma. Moreover, there was the bombarding flavor from the deluxe wild boar bacon and the sweetness from fresh

eggs rushing forth.

The sauce that came out when I was roasting was able to draw out the deliciousness from the meat and the eggs no matter how many times, then the bing enveloped all of that deliciousness.

The task of the bing wasn't just that. It enabled the teeth to bite into the crunchiness on the surface that felt good, while the fluffy dough on the inside entangled with the meat juice and egg yolk. It then met again with the crispy part; between that and the fluffy part, the texture was ever changing. The Alpine leek also did a good job of creating the effect of washing off the rich flavors.

It's precisely because it is simple that the attentiveness to details creates a huge difference.

"To be able to make this kind of dish from such simple ingredients really surprised me."

"But you still made an unsatisfied expression."

He should have been sincere when saying that the cooking was enjoyable. Yet, he still looks unsatisfied.

"Am I too obvious? To be frank, I still feel like I haven't eaten enough. As soon as I finished eating something this delicious, my stomach feels all the more empty."

"I thought you would say that, so I prepared something."

I go back to the kitchen, then bringing back a bottle and a plate of thinly sliced bacon that was roasted for a moment.

"What could it be?"

"It's mead, made from honey. I've been thinking lately to make alcohol in my own fief. This is my trial product. Let's drink it with bacon as a side dish."

Mead is an alcohol that is so easy to make that it is said to be the oldest alcohol in mankind's history. Just by leaving honey with low sugar content alone, the condition to make alcohol is met. It is suitable to start being produced in my fief.

“That’s good thinking. I wish to partake without fail.”

I nod to his response, then pour plenty of mead into his cup. This is me, utilizing my knowledge from the previous world and raising the bar. On top of having just eaten something tasty and feeling good about it, if he drinks this, he will become fairly less wary to speak.

Now, let’s hear about different kinds of information from him. I don’t think that Faruno has an unusual design for me, but it wouldn’t be surprising for the people around her to plan through her.



Chapter 3

Volg's Expectations and Mead

"I had no idea that briny bacon would be a great pair with mead like this." Volg, with his hand holding the bacon that I took out and drinking mead, makes an admiring praise.

"I'm just pairing the things I like. I hoped you would enjoy it."

A sweet alcohol and briny flavored side dish are a great pair. My trial mead has drawn the alcohol percentage from a complete decomposition of sugar, so it definitely could become a special product if I adjust the flavor by adding honey and fruit juice. With a strong alcohol percentage, it can still have a mild taste and be drunk smoothly.

"Volg, tell me one thing. Why is a mana-wielder like you sent to this kind of remote region? Usually, you can be stationed anywhere you want, right?"

That is the common sense of this world. A person who can wield mana is very valuable just for the sake of it. In that sense, the Arnolds are the abnormal ones.

"It's for the sake of protecting my lady, of course. With you as the opponent, she can't be protected unless by me... Well, that's the excuse, at least." Volg throws a challenging look at me. "You intended to make my tongue loose from the alcohol and leak some information to you, I suppose."

"You caught me. That was indeed my intention when I offered this alcohol." I lightly confirm it.

It's true that I have that kind of ulterior motive. Even if I'm caught, I don't feel offended nor hurt.

"Actually, there is no need for you to do that. I had no intention of hiding anything from you from the beginning. Marquis Fernandes entrusted his wish for me to train you."

I tilt my neck to side when I hear that.

“You were recognized as the next feudal lord of Arnold due to your mastery in the spear. When I saw your stance and behavior, I could tell that there was nothing I could teach you about martial arts. But that’s it. In this world, there are people who are overwhelmingly powerful once they wield a specific weapon.”

Without knowing the existence of Abilities, the fact that such people do exist is perceived as general knowledge. For example, the ancestor of the Arnold family; the moment he wielded a spear he demonstrated movements whose might far surpassed the next person. There are many more stories of those kinds of existences.

“Furthermore, people who wield mana have extraordinary physical abilities, being able to move in a manner that surpasses any ordinary man.”

That’s also the truth. It is said that the difference of fighting power between a soldier who wields mana and one who doesn’t is about 30 : 1. Generally, the physical abilities of someone who wields mana is approximately equal to Ability II. Conversely, if someone has Ability III, they can win against an ordinary mana-wielder.

“It means, you cannot draw out your full power unless you are using a specific weapon, despite being able to use mana.”

“I was found out, huh... Well, with my undeveloped body, even that is already doubtful.” I couldn’t utilize the majority of my physical ability once it was increased by my Ability. That’s the reason why I never go full power except when I’m training.

“Even if you can’t draw out your full power, that strength is still something to watch out for. As expected from the man who my lady sees. Back to the topic, you have to be able to pull out your full power while wielding a spear, in addition to the combined power from your mana boost. You have both mana and your weapon, the makings of a great soldier. You have that potential.”

I thought so, too. If I can wield both the power of an Ability and the power from mana at the same time, to what extent can I display my strength, I wonder? Although this strength is not important for baking pastries, there are things that I cannot protect if I am powerless. Being strong can only mean something if I exist. I want to protect everything with my own power.

“I want to be able to do that too.”

“That’s the exact reason for me being here. Incidentally, I can also use both. In other

words, this is something that I can teach you. Let's train you properly until you can draw forth your full power from wielding both mana and weapon simultaneously."

"What do you get from doing this?"

"In times of emergency, Marquis Fernandes will be able to rely on your power. Ultimately, the number of excellent mana-wielders will determine the superiority on the battlefield. You alone are worth a hundred soldiers. Isn't that something worth expecting for?"

"Does that mean I have to return this favor if a battle occurs?"

"A baronet's position doesn't allow him to refuse a dispatch call from the marquis in the first place. No matter how small, this offer increases your likelihood of survival, so it has a huge benefit for you. Though I also have my personal expectations... Me, I want to go all out."

Volg shows me a bloody grin.

"Three years ago, in the war, I also participated. As I could wield mana and able to increase my strength the moment I used a weapon, I naturally did. But it was terribly dull. Too weak."

That was the smile of an overwhelmingly strong soldier, his hidden arrogance.

"I really wish for an opponent I can fight earnestly, a toy that won't break even if I go all out. At your current state, Kurt-sama, your strength isn't enough. However, if I train you, you can become a man worthy of me going all out with. No, maybe you'll even come out as someone who can beat me with ease. I believed that since the first time I took a look at you."

I wryly smile. How to say it, that reason is so straightforward that I feel at ease, on the contrary.

"I understand. Volg, train me."

"Yes, I'll train you thoroughly."

This talk has no merit for me. It's only a justification for what I'll receive. Using both mana and Ability together. I'll show this man how I will completely pass that special

training.



Afterwards, Volg took a while to go back to his place. Tina perceived Volg as a scary person, so she worried deeply about me, who had agreed to accept his teachings. I patted her head, then she stopped looking so anxious. *Don't worry. That man means no harm.*

Feeling relieved, Tina looks interested in the alcohol now. She can't stop looking at the leftover alcohol.

"Tina, do you perhaps want to taste this drink?"

"Th- that is, only a tiny, little bit."

She's young, but she's growing fast. There shouldn't be a problem with letting her drink the alcoholic beverage.

"It's okay, you can drink, but only a little. This is the alcohol that I made through great effort, so I'll be happy if you can tell me your impressions. Once we successfully increase the number of the bees, this will be produced in large amounts too."

"Yes, Kurt-sama, thank you for the drink! Everyone seems to enjoy alcohol with happy faces, I really wanted to try."

I pour some mead into Tina's cup. Tina's eyes are sparkling with anticipation.

"Uwaa, it's golden colored and pretty, and it smells so good."

She grasps the cup respectfully with both hands, then drinks from it. Gulp, gulp, gulp, the sound comes from her throat. It's sweet and tastes good, so she drinks it smoothly. But, it's no good. If she drinks the glass in one go like that...

"Kurt-shamaa..."

It seems my bad feeling is on point, her eyes are completely on the hunt. Somehow, she seems weak against alcohol. She's completely drunk now.



“What is it, Tina?”

“Why can’t *Kurt-shama* just look at me? There’s loots of women around you, I’m lonely. Even though *Kurt-shama* is my *Kurt-shama* and we’ve aalways been together.”

As she says that, Tina climbs onto my lap and leans her body weight on me. She’s behaving like those times when I’m spoiling her.

“Tina is very important to me, though?”

“I knew that. *Kurt-shama* is kind, and spoils me lots and lots, but, I want you to only look at me. I want you to only be my *Kurt-shamaa*.”

From the position of leaning her back on me, she turns around. She opens her legs and straddles my lap like a koala. Then she rubs her cheek on my chest.

“*Kurt-shamaa*, just what am I to you? Why won’t you lay your hands on me, nobles usually do, everyone says so, I’m fine though if it’s *Kurt-shama*, so why, you’re so kind, you’re way too kind.”

Tina’s eyes are clouded, her heart is beating hard.

“Say, Kurt-sama,”

Tina looks up and meets my eyes.

“I’m,”

Her breath is hot. She’s different than Tina that I know. My distance with her grows closer. Then...

“Zzz...”

“Huh?” Without realizing, I made a stupid sound.

After saying whatever she wanted, Tina’s breath grows deeper as she falls asleep. Jeez, what a selfish princess.

I decided not to let her drink alcohol again. I smile bitterly, then carry her over to the bedroom. If, once she wakes up, she remembers all of this, let’s try hard to make fun

of her instead.

Chapter 4

The Distance to Jörg

It's been a few days since Volg and the others arrived and started building the residence. Right now, their presence has been a huge plus for the Arnold fief. For delivering their daily necessities, the peddlers have been really active. Thanks to the payment that I received for the land price and nuisance fee, I start to let go of our budgeting problems.

In the raspberry flower garden where the honey bees are gathered, I thought about my younger brother, Jörg. I went to visit him after the day of our match, but I couldn't. I was told that his wounds were deep and he hadn't regained consciousness. I left it for a while and decided to go visit him again around the time he should be awake. It'll come any time now.

I want to talk with Jörg about a lot of things. I wish that I could close the gap with my younger brother even if just a little. It's for his sake, sure, but it's also for my sake.

I think I'm going to make him some sweets that suits us brothers and bring it to him.

"Just as Kurt-sama said, the honeycombs are filled up by a white substance."

"Yeah, I'm happy that it has reached this point. Inside that substance, there's a new queen bee among the larvae."

Right now, while cleaning the bee hives just with Tina, we have a new task: to increase the number of bees. The organism that we call bees will hatch from eggs that can only be laid by the queen bee. Furthermore, in a hive, there can only be one queen bee. That's why there's a limit to the pace and the number of bees we can increase in one hive. Conversely, if we transfer a queen bee to a different hive, that queen bee can make a new colony and increase the number of bees more efficiently.

"But it feels kind of strange to intentionally hatch a queen bee."

"That's human intelligence."

The difference between a queen bee and common bee only lies in their food source as a larva. Only by feeding on a white substance called royal jelly will it grow into a large and strong queen bee, capable of laying many eggs.

Usually, by feeding a number of queen bee larvae candidates with royal jelly, there'll be one among them that safely grows into a queen bee, while the rest of them are killed. They won't create a new one unless the current queen bee is old and weak.

However, we can hatch an artificial queen bee. By modifying one section of the hive, we can carry royal jelly for the larvae inside. The bees have this habit of feeding royal jelly to larva in a peculiar shaped room called a queen cell (*oudai*) in the corner of the broods. Therefore, it's just the case of how to form a queen cell.

Moreover, the nutritious royal jelly that can nurture a queen bee can also become a high grade medicine. I was thinking to sell some once we could harvest them, eventually.

"The larva inside the queen cells that we prepared is growing into a queen bee as we speak. We'll transfer it to a different hive somewhere with some worker bees and drones. Once it happens, the hatched bees will increase even if we leave them alone."

With this, we can make another new hive. There are only ten hives now, but I'm aiming for fifty hives next year. The hive boxes can be made thanks to the surplus budget, the materials are also being purchased little by little.

"Kurt-sama, we can increase the number of bees and hives, obviously... but we can't catch up with the tasks."

"That's what's been on my mind, too."

Tina is right. Originally, this pioneering village has no extra personnel for the reclamation. On top of that, we're already lacking manpower from the additional task of taking care of the chickens. Among them, there's no one who has already seen the task of beekeeping. Tina and I already have our hands full by taking care of ten boxes. I can't even begin to spell the trouble that fifty boxes would bring.

"How about taking people from other villages?"

"It's possible. This village is the newest one, so the reclamation takes up the most of our time, but the other villages have new children. If we put up a notice of recruitment,

people will probably flock here. At the very least, I want to get as many helping hands as possible this time.”

One of the purposes of land reclamation is to feed the villagers. However, due to the issues of reclamation pace and the number of children, there are also villagers who can't succeed their lands, those second sons, third sons. I should conduct a scouting for these capable personnel. Once I do that, the other village will be happy from reducing the excess mouths to feed, while my village will be happy to receive the additional manpower that we're lacking in.

However, I want to avoid that method this time as much as I can. If we successfully cultivate fifty beehives, other villages will soon follow. Once we come to that, the excess members they currently have will become necessary.

“Did you think about other plans?”

“I'm going to Marquis Fernandes' place to bake pastries as a present for the duchess soon. I'm thinking about recruiting people to immigrate to our settler's village at that time. The other side is much stabler than ours, they have also stopped their reclamation progress, so they have an extreme surplus of members. I've been meaning to increase the population of the Arnold fief itself.”

“That sounds wonderful! This land will become wealthier than we are now!”

“That's right. Reality is harsh, though. Whether they choose to come here or not is a problem by itself already. Moreover, it's out of question if we can't increase their earnings, including for those additional members. If we can't make them think that coming here will increase their livelihood, no one will come.”

“Arnold is infamous for being poor, so they may not wish to come here.”

Hearing Tina's worrisome mumble, I can't help but to smile bitterly.

“For now, yes. It's kind of hopeless this time around, I think. Once our honey business goes well, though, that kind of image will soon disappear. Anyhow, the honey we have here has already received a stamp of approval from Marquis Fernandes for its taste. Once we start selling it, I'm sure we'll become a wealthy village in no time.”

The honey will surely bring an enormous fortune for us. Well, we still have the problem of lacking manpower to reach that point, though. Realistically speaking, we

can recruit people by saying they have nothing to lose this time. If that's still no good, we can borrow people from other villages, start selling at a small scale, then start recruiting again for the next cycle.

While thinking about that, we're proceeding with the tasks to increase the number of bees. For now, in order to cultivate new bees, the stockpiling nectar is used by the bees, so we can't harvest too much honey. This is our future investment, though. It's for the sake of harvesting way, way more honey than we have now, next year.



After doing a bit of work, I returned to the kitchen again. I'm here for the sake of making sweets for Jörg. I realized that this was the first time I did something like this for that guy. In that sense, maybe I was strange. For the sake of him who has been the closest to me, let's make sweets. That is my duty as his older brother.

If I had looked at him properly and loved him, our relationship would certainly be far different than what we have now. I can't change the past, but I can change the future, so I'm going to make special sweets for that sake.

The sweets that will patch up my bond with Jörg, one that will send him off to his new stage.

Chapter 5

Spiky Konpeitō

Somehow, I managed to save a slot of time and came to the main village for the sake of visiting my sick brother, Jörg. It seems that he has been staying put in his bedroom.

I arrive at his room and knock on the door. There's no answer. I knock once again. And as expected, there's still no answer.

"Jörg, are you in there?"

I can feel a presence, I'm pretty sure someone is in the room. I abruptly turn the door knob. Seems like it's not locked.

"I'm coming in, Jörg."

I only gave that simple warning before entering Jörg's bedroom.



It's the first time I ever stepped into Jörg's room. The view inside startles me. Aside from the spear leaning on the wall, there's practically nothing. It's Jörg, you know? I thought his room would be flashier, more luxurious.

Looking at this room makes me even further from understanding the human called Jörg. The room is *that* hollow.

"Jörg, I've come to visit." That's what I said before sitting on the chair beside the bed. Jörg peeks out from the bed cover, looking at me as if looking at the most annoying thing for him.

"What, Nii-san? Have you come to laugh at me?"

"Why would I?"

"Mr. Nice Guy! You see, it's my loss, the big mouthed, insulting, hateful guy in your

book! As an Arnold, you eliminated me in the spear talent that *I'm* supposed to have, becoming the heir to the fiefdom, I'm sure it really feels good, doesn't it? Thanks to you, I'm back to just being a useless younger brother! I'm worse than you in everything, just a worthless human being." Jörg raises his voice.

Perhaps, the spear is the only support for his mind. Once that's taken away from him, there's no way he can stay calm.

"I never thought that you're worthless, Jörg. Objectively speaking, you have the talent in martial arts, you can think fast, and you have a good ability to learn. There's no one as talented as you in Arnold."

Jörg became rebellious from continuous comparisons against me, but he was a man with talent to begin with, an excellent child from a long time ago. If I wasn't around, he would have been the anticipated heir to the fiefdom in everyone's eyes.

"Maybe you don't. But I'm still no match for you. In everything." Saying that, Jörg turned his face away. He paused a moment before speaking again, "Hey, what are you planning to do with me? As the next lord, you can do anything to me. Are you driving me out by myself? Or, are you taking revenge for the things I did to you until now? Whatever, I don't care anymore. Do whatever you like."

Jörg acts completely negligent. Is he afraid of my retaliation?

"I don't really hate you, though. I have no plans to take revenge on you either."

"You're lying. I did a lot of horrible things to you. There's no way you won't resent me."

"I really don't resent you. I don't hate you either. I only think of you as annoying... Ah, what you did to Tina made me angry for real, though. But this Jörg, the one in front of me, isn't a nuisance, so I don't mind it. I don't think I have the energy to hate someone, it's a waste of time."

Jörg looks speechless, his lips are trembling all over. Then his face contorts in sadness, before showing a dry smile as if he gets it.

"I knew it, Nii-san. You don't even resent me, right? Everything is just my one-sided struggle. I knew it, you have no interest in me whatsoever." He murmurs as if he's given up in everything.

“...I’m telling you what I think until now. I have no interest in you, Jörg. But I wish to change. I want you to forgive me. I never looked at anything besides my own dreams. I never thought of anything besides making pastries, neglecting you in the process. Even though you’re my only brother in the whole world.”

That’s my true feelings. I only had the room to think about how to succeed the fief. Only now I realize how I have wronged others. That’s why I want to make it right. Jörg and I are brothers. That fact isn’t going to change.

In that case, I want us brothers to be happy.

“...What was that? Saying all of that now, are you pitying me?”

“You’re wrong. It’s not for your sake, but mine.”

“You just forced those feelings on me. Who do you think you are? You know that you never cared for me whatsoever.”

“That’s why I have to change. From now on, I’m going to stay close to you for real, as your brother.”

With the tears start flowing, Jörg looks away.

“...Jeez, you’re so late, Nii-san. I always wish you’d turn around. If you looked at me, I would’ve gladly handed over the headship of the family. I knew that everyone would understand, because you were a better fit to govern Arnold instead of me... I always admire you.” Jörg spoke as if he was choking.

Those words make me understand that he was really lonely.

It doesn’t mean that his past wrongdoings or negligence don’t exist. It’s just, now I get that he also has his own thoughts behind them.

“I’m actually happy to hear your words... Jörg, I think it’s necessary to put some distance between us. As long as I’m here in this fief, people are going to look at you just as my younger brother. That’s why, I have a proposal for you.”

After I said that, Jörg turned to look at me.

“I sent a request to Marquis Fernandes to let you become a baron’s attendant.”

Jörg becomes warped because he's always being compared to me. If he can put his effort to use his own talent and hard work, something is most likely going to change. He has to utilize the quick wits that he was born with.

"It's different from an excellent man like you, but can someone like me become a baron's attendant?"

"It's usually impossible. However, Marquis Fernandes noticed my pastry-making skills. Furthermore, he's relying on me to present some pastries as a gift to a ducal house. If the marquis is satisfied with that pastry, I was promised that you could become an attendant as a reward."

A noble's attendant isn't a bad status. It's even a desired employment for a son of noble who couldn't inherit the peerage.

"Nii-san, is it okay? You're using your hard-earned reward for me."

"I want to do that. Jörg, I wish you'd put your best effort in a place without connections to Arnold. As a man, you'd like to try that, right? To see how far you can go with your own power."

Jörg stepped on the wrong path where he felt strained from his inferiority complex against me, where he only wanted me to look his way. What he needs right now is putting some distance from me and having an environment that will reward him for his efforts.

"Thank you, Nii-san. I want to go to somewhere I won't be compared to you. I want to try going to a place where I'll be recognized not as your younger brother, but as myself." Jörg's mutters sound lonely.

"Hey, Jörg. I still have the continuation to this talk," I said, pausing for a moment there. "In the baron's place, after you try going all out, I want you to decide on your own path there. Whether you want to keep working there all your life, or you want to come back here to Arnold."

"Coming back to Arnold?"

"That's right. If you feel like it, if you have truly grown up, I wish to rely on you as my assistant. I told you just now. You have talent, Jörg. I want you to lend me your strength. Of course, if you're more interested in your new environment, it's okay not to come

back. There's still a long time before you have to decide on your path. Meanwhile, I want you to think of your choice... of your own life." I convey it strongly.

I won't pressure him to choose one or the other. Because that's his life.

"My choice... Yes, I'll do that, Nii-san. I want to be aware of the path I'm taking. I'll stop being captivated by you."

Jörg shows me his smile. That kind of carefree smile is his first in ten years, I think.

"Work hard. Jörg. Well, I'll send you some letters, and I'll be happy to receive some from you. Because we're brothers, right?"

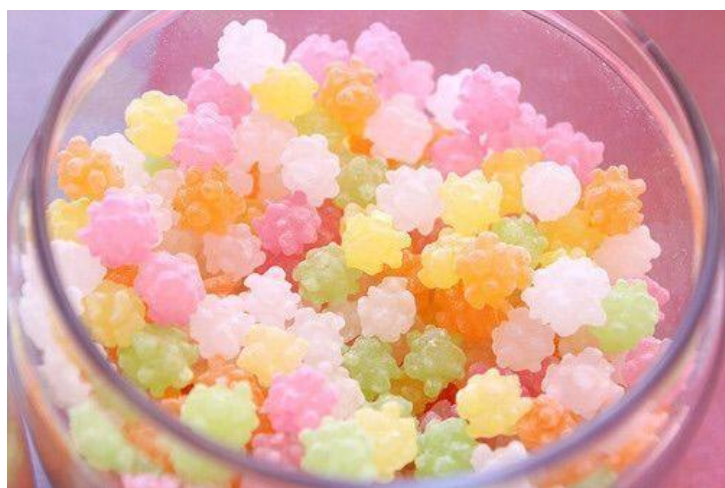
"Nii-san, you're shameless. You know how distant you were for ten years already."

His words are harsh, but there are tender emotions in there as we both laugh. After a long, long while, I finally feel like we're really brothers.

"This is your farewell gift." I pass the wrapped jar to him.

"Nii-san, this is?"

"It's sweets that I made for your sake. They're called konpeitō."



Jörg opens the wrapping. Beneath it, there's a jar of colorful sugar candy, konpeitō. It's small, spiky sweets in multiple colors, filling up the jar. I made the variations by mixing some extracted essences from vegetables into boiled, concentrated honey.

"They're hard and spiky, sounds like us, right? It looks like that, but after putting them

in your mouth for a while, they'll become round and really sweet. I wish that we can become like that."

Jörg grins and puts one konpeitō into his mouth. Rolling it around, the konpeitō vanishes. "Nii-san, this, it's amazing, it's sweet and brittle, ah I see, this sweetness, is warm, sweet, and calming. It's a great sweet. It's great if we can become these kind of brothers."

Jörg slightly looks and sounds like a child. It suits him.

"These sweets won't get spoiled. Bring them with you throughout the years. When it feels tough, take a few of them. That's the present I'm giving you. These sweets are just for you. Until you return home, I won't make this for anyone else."

"Specially made for me, I'm really happy. Nii-san... Thank you." Jörg hugs the jar tight. "I had no idea that you're such a romantic man."

"Did you? That being said, I know nothing about you either. But that's okay, isn't it? From now on, let's get to know each other, one step at a time."

After that, we talk to each other until the sun is down. That is just as if we're really good normal brothers. The sweets that I'm presenting to the duchess for my sake, for his sake too, has to be really convincing to everyone.

Chapter 6

Departure to Marquis Fernandes

“Tina, you don’t really have to come with me, though?”

“I am Kurt-sama’s partner. I’ll attend to you no matter where you go!”

Tina and I are inside the carriage arranged by Marquis Fernandes. We are departing towards Marquis Fernandes’ territory. In that place, the announcement party to celebrate my engagement to Faruno and the pastry-making for the duchess’ present are both awaiting. Things will get busy soon.

“Kurt-sama, Tina-san, please do your best. I wish I was allowed to go as well, but I cannot part from this place no matter what.” Volg, Faruno’s butler, expresses his apology while sending us off. He can be said to be a heavily armed existence. If he’s not around, the process of building Faruno’s residence will surely slow down.

“Volg, you should just focus on your own duty. I’m going to do my best in my own. That’s all.”

I owe Volg. Just as he said on his first day here, he’s been training me to use both mana and ability at the same time. I have an opponent to go all out with, and he also makes me realize my imperfections. Volg taught me how crucial it was. Thanks to him, I’ve gradually become stronger.

“I’m leaving Faruno-sama to you. If you’re giving me high praises, maybe my salary will increase.”

“I’ll think about it if you treat me next time.”

Volg and I are throwing jokes at each other. Our bond grew deep from exchanging fists.

“The present from Faruno-sama really suits you, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, I’ll use it with great care.”

I hit my chest. There's a hidden pocket beneath where I store the present from Faruno.

"How splendid. My lady will surely be pleased as well."

When Volg came to greet me, I received Faruno's gift from him. The true form of the present was a cake knife. It's of really high quality, way beyond this civilization. It's indispensable for a pastry chef, so I was truly happy. That's why I made an inner pocket in my coat and carry it with me everywhere.

"Kurt-sama, Volg-sama, it's time to depart." The coachman called to us.

It's about time to go, or else we won't arrive in Marquis Fernandes' territory by sundown.

"Bye, I'll be going. Salt, I'll leave the things here to you while I'm gone. I'm sorry for adding to your burden." I call out to another man in this place. Salt is the settler's village's representative. He's a popular man, I rely on him whenever I'm not around.

"Got it. Don't worry about us, young master. Just go all out. With your great effort, this land will become more and more prosperous."

Because he's here, I can be absent. At the end, as I have to oversee the whole Arnold fief from the main village, I'm planning to leave things in this village to him. The tasks to take care of the bees while I'm gone are left to several new members from other villages. These past few days, I drilled into them the minimum tasks for beekeeping. With the current number of the bees, they suffice. In my end game, they'll go back to their own village and lead the beekeeping in there for me.

"Then, we're departing."

The coachman whipped the horses, and our horse carriage departed.



"Kurt-sama, going to Marquis Fernandes' territory means going to Eclaba, doesn't it?"

"That's right. It's Eclaba. I also brought enough money with me. That place has a lot of things, so I'm excited. Ah, I really want to buy some ingredients for pastries. I'll be speechless if they have cacao."

“Cacao? That’s the first time I heard it. But it sounds delicious!... Eclaba, it’s really nostalgic.”

Marquis Fernandes governs a vast territory. There are rich lands, so of course it has towns. Marquis Fernandes’ house resides in the port town of Eclaba. With the harbor as the transportation check point, it’s a hugely active commercial town, brimming with many things. In this region, there’s no town that can compete with it. And then, Eclaba is a nostalgic place for me and Tina.

“I met with Kurt-sama in that place.”

“Yeah, I’m moved whenever I remember the Tina back then.”

“*Mou*, stop it, please. I feel a little embarrassed with myself at that time.”

Tina was originally an orphan from Eclaba. Her mother, who once lived in a village of beastkin and elves, violated the village’s rules to marry a human and practically eloped by going out of the village, then lived in Eclaba with her husband. However, Tina was left alone as her parents both died from an epidemic.

“But because that happened, I can be with Tina. That’s my precious memory, you know?”

“*Mou*, I don’t know Kurt-sama anymore.” Tina adorably looks away, even her tail turns away from me.

I wryly smile. Really, it’s because your reactions are so cute that I can’t stop teasing you. I’m messing around with Tina like that in the horse carriage, and the errand man from Marquis Fernandes opens his mouth to speak.

“Excuse me, Arnold-sama. Isn’t that spear heavy?”

“It’s not heavy. I want to keep it close all the time, just in case.”

I held Ginsen close to my chest. From the time we left the village, it never leaves my side. Because I have a bad feeling.

“But you must be tired. Please let me take care of it.”

“There’s no need to do that, because it is already a part of my body.”

“But, that, Arnold-sama is our important guest. I can’t let you feel any inconvenience as our guest. If anything happens, it’ll be given back to you as soon as possible, so, please allow me to take care of it?”

He’s excessively persistent. I start to feel wary about this guy. Something is fishy. But let’s just observe the situation.

“Since you insisted, I’ll let you handle it. Also, this isn’t a spear. It’s a weapon called *naginata*, and his name is Ginsen. Treat it with care.” So I say while passing the *naginata*. I prepared an insurance closely. I should be able to deal with anything just like usual.

After that, the man’s lips turned up in a tiny smile. Seems like he’s thinking about something wicked. Now then, what kind of move will he make?

Acting nonchalantly, my wariness grows stronger.

Chapter 7

Bandits

The horse carriage rhythmically goes forward to our destination. For now, there's no problem. It's just the movements of the man before me that piques my interest. Looking out of the window, he looks to be sending some signals. I'd rather nothing happens like this, though.

"Neiiiigh!"

But that kind of thought is naive. The horse is neighing, shaking the carriage wildly.

"Give me Ginsen!"

I shouted instantly, but the man ignored my shout and jumped out of the carriage with Ginsen in tow.

I see, so that's his aim.

"Tina, wait for me inside the carriage."

"Kurt-sama, please stay safe." Tina squeezes my hand while looking at me. Her face tells me that she wants to go out there with me, but she knows she'll just be a burden. She seems to swallow the words back down.

I ruffle her hair and speak, "Yeah, I'll be back soon."

Let's finish this up real quick so she won't be worried.



When I went out, a bandit-like group already surrounded the carriage. The man who held Ginsen ran straight towards the bandits' direction.

"The easiest trap to notice is heavy, huh?" I laugh wryly. From the start, that guy has been the bandits' accomplice.

I'm assessing the situation. The coachman is crouching from the arrow on his leg, the horse is dead. Nearly every bandit is equipped with arrows, and the moment they saw me, they strained the bow strings.

"Fire! He's unarmed. Even if he's an Arnold, without a spear he's just a normal man!" the guy holding Ginsen shouts.

I see, he knows that much.

The Arnolds are somewhat famous for displaying a greater strength than an average man, but only when fighting with a spear. However, that's not the information that should've been known to a common bandit. Someone must have been pulling the strings.

The bandits fire the arrows. They pour down like rain.

I take out and hold the cake knife from my coat's inner pocket. However, I don't take off the protective cloth wrap from it.

It's the tool to make the pastries that will make people happy. I must not taint it with blood.

My brain is accelerating. My strength overflows. Sword Ability III has manifested. Yeah, displaying the ability is already sufficient.

My powered up brain and reflexes show the arrows' trajectories. Then, with my empty left hand, I chop and deflect the direct hits only. I avoid the arrowheads, my deflecting hand doesn't hurt at all. All the bandit men's jaws are dropping.

"No way, isn't he just a normal man without a spear!?"

"My bad, I'm not a normal Arnold."

I step in with full strength. In that split second, I kick off with my foot, denting the ground's surface with a thunderous roar as I jump off like a rocket. Fusing the strengthening from mana and ability equals an overwhelming physical strength. This is exactly my full strength. The power that I gained from my special training with Volg.

The power of my former self can't hold a candle to my current power. I close in upon one of the bandits. Striking his jaw with my left palm, I reap his consciousness

instantly. He didn't even have time to scream.

After toppling one of the bandits, those who remain finally notice my movements. Our time axis are different. They can't even perceive my movements. I strike at many bandits. With me running past the gap, they fall unconscious one after another. Aiming to palm strike or hand chop their jaws or napes, I barely use up my strength.

"Oi, I didn't hear about this. As long as his spear is gone, he's supposed to be a normal dude."

"This isn't human speed."

"What the hell is happening?"

The screams are mingled. Every scream is reaped. And then, not a minute after, they're all annihilated except for two men remaining. They are the guy holding Ginsen and a single bandit.

"Now then, I should listen to your story now. That's why I didn't knock you out." I turn around at the last bandit, intimidating him. From his equipment and the way he moves, I figured he was the bandits' leader.

"Bastard, making fun of me, eh!?"

"I wouldn't do such a thing."

I flip over the rushing, raging bandit, then I hold him against the ground, dislocating both of his shoulders and knee joints, rendering him utterly powerless. I don't give a damn to his shriek. There should be no problem if he can still speak.

"And you, don't you run away. You're the bandits' comrade, right?"

I grin towards Marquis Fernandes' servant.

"Yo-you're mistaken."

"Don't lie to me."

"It's true, I have nothing to do with this, nothing at all. Believe me, please believe me."

He's tearing up, obstinately insisting with both his hands clutching and begging. However, I don't buy it. I tug Marquis Fernandes' servant's shoulder and forcibly dislocate the joint.

"Gya-gyaaaaaaaaaaaa!" He screams like a pig to his surroundings.

"Say, aren't you underestimating me? Who'll buy that kind of lie? You knew about the Arnolds' power. Because you knew, you attempted to separate me and Ginsen. You thought I'd be an ordinary man without Ginsen. Such an obvious attempt, even an idiot would've noticed."

This guy was pushy and sloppy. Most likely, he really was underestimating me, a low bottom aristocrat from a rural village.

"Moreover, I knew you kept signaling to the outside after I entrusted Ginsen to you. I intentionally faked ignorance. Afterwards, the bandits did come. Coincidence much?"

I grab his left shoulder too. However, there's one thing that still makes me calm. This incident isn't related to Marquis Fernandes himself. The marquis didn't know that my aptitude lies in swords instead of spears, but he knew I could wield mana. This level of manpower contending against a mana wielder is unthinkable. This ambush was designed under the assumption of opposing a mere spear ability wielder. Therefore, Marquis Fernandes is clean. If he betrays me, I'll lose my ability to trust other people.

"Ee, eek, wr, wro, wrong!"

"Which part am I wrong?" I noncommittally ask.

"Really, I, it's wrong. I've nothing to do, nothing to do with this."

"Then let's confirm it." I walk towards the bandits.

Tucking back the cake knife to my coat, I pick up a twig around the place and snap it off to sharpen the edge.

"You bandit over there, is this man your comrade or just someone who cooperated with you? I'll gouge your eyes out if you lie."

The bandit pisses in his pants. Even if he wants to retaliate, his arms and legs are immobile, turning him into a mush. "Ye, yes, you're right. After he took your spear, we

needed to assault you. He told us that, you, you're just an ordinary guy without your spear, we could get money from attacking you. That man is an accomplice."

"Th, that's a lie! He's just spouting nonsense!"

Marquis Fernandes' servant makes a fuss.

"So? Is that man lying? Then I'm gouging your eyes out now."

"It's true! W, we received some money..." The bandit repeatedly begs to be believed.

Oh, well, seems like it. It's easy to see with my own eyes whether they're telling the truth or not.

"It's just as it looks like. Seeing his desperation, I can figure out that he's not lying. But, what about you? If you're still planning to lie, I've no other option but to let you see hell. If you tell me the truth here, I'll spare your life."

With me flashing around the twig, that man started to spill them all out, one at a time.



From that point, I tied a rope around the bandits' leader and the servant who cooperated with the bandits, loaded them onto the carriage, and departing once again to Eclaba, where Marquis Fernandes resides.

I can gain more valuable information from these two. The remaining bandits are a hindrance, so I have them tied up around trees. What is going to happen to them, I'll leave that to Marquis Fernandes.

The injured coachman is an unrelated victim, so I treated his wounds in that place before resting inside the carriage with Tina.

I push the horse to run. I'm borrowing the bandits' horse to replace the dead one. The one they have is actually not bad. I'll make sure to take it back with me to the village.



Rushing while being guided by the coachman, we finally arrived at Marquis Fernandes' mansion. When we arrived, the servants cheerfully went out to greet us. However,

after I quickly explained to them about that servant's betrayal and the ambush by the bandits, the servants hurried to return to the mansion. After only a short while, a servant shows up and brings Marquis Fernandes with him.

"You've done well to reach this place. Kurt-kun... For bringing trouble to you, I deeply apologize." Even though he has a very lofty position, Marquis Fernandes bowed his head deeply to me. This man is truly capable. He's not haughty like a normal noble.

"Please don't bow to me. Marquis Fernandes is also a victim here as well. I let your coachman get injured, even a horse died, so."

"I've heard about the bandits' ambush only until Rasse's hand in that. I wish to hear about the details from you."

Rasse is that servant's name, the one who betrayed us.

"Yes. As far as I know, the man called Rasse admitted to being a certain noble's errand man and received some huge amount of cash to assassinate me. There's some indication that the noble isn't too happy with my engagement to Faruno-sama, or so it seems."

"This is a serious situation. Still, though, recklessly picking a fight with you is just not treasuring their lives."

"They won't fear an Arnold like me once I don't have my spear. After scheming to take the spear, they must have bragged to the bandit that I can die in the raid."

"A real fool... The person who meant to assault you and Rasse too, accepting the scheme for some money."

This incident comes from a noble's jealousy. A third-rate noble's son like me, who obtained Marquis Fernandes' backing and even the beautiful Faruno, must have been a source of envy. Most probably, that person aims to replace me.

"Since I have no plan to blow this incident up, I will leave it to you, Marquis, for the aftermath. The man who seems to be the bandits' leader and Rasse are both left alive, so feel free to do as you please."

In other words, control the information to follow the dirty money. Someone like Marquis Fernandes will want to protect his dignity while finding the mastermind.

“Absolutely. Leave it to me. I’ll tie up the loose ends.”

From now on, it’s their part. I have nothing else to say.

“Kurt-kun, let me properly compensate you. It still doesn’t change the fact that my servant has caused you problems. I’ll arrange it before you return home.”

“Please accept my deepest gratitude.”

Declining here will simply smear mud in Marquis Fernandes’s face, the Arnolds are probably unlikely to receive any expression of apology either.

So, I obediently took advantage of the marquis’ favor.

Chapter 8

Sweet Smelling Baked Apple

After finishing the talk with Marquis Fernandes, his servant soon led us towards our room.

Faruno, who was gone due to attending some noble's wedding ceremony, will be back after three days. There's a part of me who feels lonely somewhere.

I look around the room. It's a nice one. Most likely, it's prepared for privileged guests. Since it's divided for a married pair, I can be here alone with Tina. I have to thank Marquis Fernandes.

I'm planning to bake the pastry for the duchess' present the day after tomorrow, then appear at the engagement's announcement party with Faruno three days later. The announcement of my betrothal to Faruno is related to a large assembly of nobles. I can't afford to be sloppy. From now on, I have to enter my serious mode.

"Tina, let's go to the market tomorrow. Before baking the pastries, I want to look around and see various things. I've decided on the recipe, but if I find a new ingredient at the marketplace, I may gain a flash of insight... Moreover, there are heaps of new food before us. I can barely hold back."

I smirk. If my heart doesn't dance here, I can't call myself a pâtissier.

"Yes, Kurt-sama, let's go. Eclaba's market. I'm looking forward to it. There seems to be a lot of wonderful things!"

"I know, right? Even if the ingredient isn't necessary for the next pastry, let's buy the good things. We don't get this kind of chance too often."

A port town, now, what kind of thing will I get to see this time...?



Tina and I have set off to the market in the morning. The early activeness startles me. It seems that there are almost 50 thousand people populating this port town. Even if I gather all the villagers, the population of the Arnold fief will barely reach 500 people. They're truly incomparable.

People and goods are overflowing. I feel jealous, really.

ティナ

見たことがない果物が

「あつ、あつちには

「うわあ、あのお店に並んでいるの
海のお魚らしいですよ」

クルト・アルノルト

“Uwaa, that shop’s display looks like a line of seafood. They look so much bigger than the fish from the rivers.” Tina, looking at the fish that resembles sea bream, is shocked. Her fox ears are twitching cheerfully. *“Ah, that shop has many fruits I haven’t seen before! Red and round, I wonder how it tastes. It smells sweet.”* This time, her eyes sparkles from finding apples.

Excited at everything in her sight, Tina is really in high spirits. While wryly smiling, I chase after her and her antics.

“Let’s leave the fish alone, they’ll get spoiled before we can reach Arnold, and if we try to prepare them to eat in Marquis Fernandes’ territory, I’ll get distracted.”

“...Really? It’s such a shame.” Tina’s fox ears collapse flat to her head. Seafood is something that she will never have the chance to eat in Arnold’s mountainous area, so I understand that she really wants to have a taste.

“We can’t buy them raw, but I want to eat them too. Let’s have lunch at that shop. I’m sure they have this fish in their menu.”

“Ah, that’s a good idea. Let’s eat by all means!” Tina clings to my arm. There’s nothing better than making her happy.

“Let’s try the fruit by buying a few. If it tastes good, we can buy lots of them to share with the people back home.”

After saying that, We go to the fruit shop, pass the money, and buy two apples. One of the two are cut in halves by the cake knife I take from my coat, then I give Tina her share.

“Try it, it’s your half.”

“Is it really okay?”

“That’s what we bought them for, right?”

After I say that, Tina smiles and bites into the apple. I can slightly hear her mouth chomping with delight.

“It’s sweet and sour, juicy, and really tasty. Kurt-sama, this is really good. Let’s grow them in our fief too!” She’s greatly impressed, because her tail has been swaying side

to side in excitement.

I nibble the apple too. Compared to the apples I'm familiar with, this is more sour and less sweet. But that's fine. It's really suitable to be added into pastries. I'll definitely buy them before we go back home.

"I want to grow them too, but it's kind of impossible. Even when treated well, apples are difficult to grow, they won't be good before we can harvest the fruit. Even if everything goes well, it takes about three years to reach that point. The hurdle is high for this one."

Until it can grow up into a tree, it'll need time, no matter how you see it. Moreover, it's weak to sickness and weather, we're going to need a huge investment in time and manpower if we want to do it seriously.

"That means, it's impossible in Arnold? I see. I thought if we could collect a lot of this fruit, everyone will be happy."

Tina looks down. I rub her head while smiling gently.

"Growing them is hopeless, but we can buy them, you know? If our honey sales are on track, we can ask the peddlers to have them stock it for us. Right now, we're just working hard for our livelihood, but anyhow, we'll definitely be able to buy them later."

Hearing my words, Tina's smile blooms widely as she nods. "Yes!"

"Also, Tina. If you're that happy with the raw ingredient, you're going to hurt a pâtissier's pride."

"Kurt-sama, you mean?"

"Why do you think I bought two apples? Of course it's to make a pastry. Once we get back, I'll use the other one and bake a great pastry, so look forward to it."

"I'm really looking forward to it! Kurt-sama's pastry!" Tina shows a joyful expression once she starts imagining my homemade pastry.

Looking at that kind of expression from her, I come to really feel happy too.



Looking at the market, I'm really surprised by the number and variety of meats, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seasonings, and liquors. I really came to wish that I lived here. As I thought, as a pâtissier, this kind of environment is truly attractive. From now on, I think I'm going to spare the time to visit here once a month.

Among them, my eyes are caught on whiskey. I wouldn't have been able to guess that they were advanced enough to have distilled alcohol. I've requested rum from Marquis Fernandes, but if there's dry spirits, it'll be more suited to the rose cookies this time. Just by finding this, our visit to the market has become really valuable.

"Oji-san, can I have a taste? I want liquor as bitter and fragrant as possible."

"You got the money, boy?" The stubborn looking shopkeeper stares at me and asks it.

My 15-year old figure probably looks like a boy's in his eyes.

"Absolutely."

I let him peek into my purse. It is full of gold and silver coins. I received them from Marquis Fernandes as the ingredients' budget.

"...Come on. Give me the best grade liquor."

The shopkeeper poured an amber-colored liquid into a small cup. I down everything in one go. So strong. But it's a good one. If using this, it'll go really well with the rose's fragrance.

"Oji-san, I'll take this one."

"Thank you for your continued patronage."

It's a good liquor with a reasonable price. The taste only gets as good as the price though.

Tina is looking at the whiskey with apparent desire. She likes liquor. After drinking once, she's completely into it. However, it doesn't seem that she realizes it.

I can't let her drink liquor. That's the valuable lesson that I gained from the previous

incident. When drunk, she's unbelievably clingy, spoiled, and assertive, far from her usual self. In that incident, the one line was nearly breached.

From then on, in the market place, we bought the ingredients one by one, such as fresh milk and eggs, then returned to the Fernandes residence. The milk and eggs are given with an additional fee as a part of the negotiation, so that I could get the fresh ones sent to me early next morning. This is also an important point to make the best cookies.

Once we arrived, I made baked apples. I carve out the core of the apples, then add brown sugar, butter, and some whiskey to bake it in the oven. It's an easy pastry.

Sure it's simple, but a well done baked apple is one of the best pastries. The heating process will tenderize the acidity and strengthen the sweetness. The fruit's flesh is moist inside, but the skin will be crispy, giving it a really seductive mouthfeel.



And then, the butter's savory taste and the brown sugar's strength, fusing with the bitter liquor, heightening the fragrance, creating multi layered taste that will in no way be contended by the raw form. I'm absolutely sure that Tina will like it and pester me to bake it again for her.

I tasted it, it seemed like it turned out really good. I can also taste the flavor, the aroma of heated whiskey. This is my goal by making a baked apple.



On the next morning, Tina and I went to the Fernandes mansion's kitchen. Right now, I'm going to bake the pastry for the duchess. It's a huge responsibility. A duke rank has a status that's only second to the king and royal family (grand dukes). If I present a

sloppy product, I may get punished by guillotine.

Compared to the marquis, a duke has fewer assets and less military strength, but the authority and influence is stronger. The saying goes like this: prestigious duke, beneficial marquis. For Marquis Fernandes to give me the chance to present my pastry to the duchess with that kind of status, my gratitude is boundless.

“Tina, bring out the jar that we prepared yesterday.”

“Yes, Kurt-sama!”

Tina takes out two jars. One of them contains rose petals dipped in honey, while the other one is filled with rose petals dipped in whiskey. By doing it this way, I’m transferring the rose’s scent and flavor. I checked the smell from the lid. Yes, that’s a nice smell. The rose’s fragrance is extracted well.

“Kurt-sama, the fresh milk and newly laid eggs from this morning have arrived too!”

“Got it. With this, the ingredients are all present. Now, shall we begin?”

My invaluable rose cookies. Let’s give them the best appearance and taste.

Chapter 9

White Rose and Black Rose Cookies

I promptly begin my preparations.

The first ingredient that I take into my hands is the fresh cream, made from the freshly squeezed milk that had just arrived.

“Kurt-sama, what are you making?” Tina, endlessly excited, is peering at my hands’ movements.

“It’s butter. That’s right, I’ve never shown you how to make butter, have I?”

I pour the fresh cream into a metal bowl, and whisk it fast. I’ve asked Tina to make ice with her magic arte, adding ice cold water to it. By doing that, the fat layer gets solidified and becomes butter. To bake cookies, unsalted butter without any salt at all is the best. Adding salt will turn the butter’s color muddy. However, not adding salt will make it easily spoiled, so it’s a luxury item for an ordinary lifestyle.

The fresh creamy milk from this morning turns into butter right now. It’s the best possible butter ever.

“Awesome, really, white and smooth and it becomes butter. It’s just like magic.”

“Cooking *is* magic. Taste it, fresh butter is just the best.”

I scoop the fresh butter with a spoon, turning it to Tina’s mouth, which she chomps on at once. Tina’s face melts happily.

“Woow, it melts instantly, so mellow.”

The new butter is light, but the flavor is strong and rich. Spreading it on some bread and eating as is will make a great breakfast. Fresh butter tastes a whole different level if eaten in thirty minutes from when it’s done.

“The butter is done, I’m going to start the dough.”

“Kurt-sama, it’s cookies this time, right? Why did you prepare four bowls?”

“To let the rose flower blooms, I need to make four different kinds of dough.”

While chopping the almonds that Marquis Fernandes arranged for me, I put rose-dipped whiskey, eggs, butter, and brown sugar. As I bake them, the dough will turn a dark, deeper flavor... This is separated into two parts of different ratios.

After that, I knead wheat flour, rose petal honey, then walnut oil that I brought from the village. As they’re baked, the dough will turn white, light flavored and brittle. Without using the eggs, they’ll taste as fresh as they can be... I also separate them into halves with different ratios.

I’ve made four different kinds of dough.

“The contrast between the white and black dough is really interesting.”

“You haven’t seen anything yet, it’ll start getting exciting now.”

I divide the well-kneaded dough into several parts, then press them each until thin. I made all the white and black dough into thick and thin rectangles.

“Tina, freeze all the dough. Carefully, okay?”

“Yes, Kurt-sama.”

The dough are getting frozen by Tina’s hand. And then, I cut that frozen dough.

“Okay then, let’s put the finishing touches.”

I stack those thin rectangular dough in different sizes one on top of the other, layered up they get rounder. And then, with the remarkably large white dough layer, I roll them up to complete the dough.

“Kurt-sama, what is this?”

“You’ll understand when you see it.”

I’ve layered the dough one on top of another again and again into a cylindrical shape, then with my cake knife, I slice it evenly. The result is round-cut cookies.

“Is that, rose?” Tina’s voice went a pitch higher in surprise as she looked at the cut cylindrical dough.

“You’re right, it’s a rose.”

“The cut surface turns into a rose pattern! So you can do it this way. But I’m bummed, it lacks a tiny bit of something, how regretful.”

“It’s all good. The roses aren’t in full bloom yet. When they’re baked, they’ll start blooming then.”

Laying the round cut cookies, I insert them into the oven. Then, at roughly the same time as they’re baked, I arrange the remaining batch by stacking them up to the very end. This time, the black dough acts as the wrap instead.

“The last one was black rose on a white canvas, but this time, it’s white rose on a black canvas! This is so pretty too.”

That’s right, the reason I divided the dough wasn’t for being eccentric or showing off. I was stacking the white and black layers of dough alternatively in order to draw the rose. It’s the same technique as Kintarou candy. By stacking rectangle shaped ingredients and turning them round, a drawing will be made. With this, no matter how many times I cut them, I can make the exact same drawing.

“But why did you divide it into four? You can make the rose pattern just by dividing it into two, right?”

“That’s no good. The rose’s deliciousness comes from the harmony between the white dough and the black dough. Drawing the black pattern and the white pattern will result in different ratios of black and white. Which ingredients to use, how much should I mix them together, their most suitable solution will be different. That’s why, the dough to make white rose and to make black rose, even though they look the same color, they actually are properly separated.”

“You’ve considered that far...”

“Doing it that far is the reason why it will become a superb pastry.” I grin. A pastry’s look is important, but the taste is also important. A pâtissier’s job is to make sure they both bloom. A compromise is unforgivable.

“It’ll finish baking soon. Tina felt bummed before that the rose didn’t look good, right?”

“I- I’m really sorry. That, uhm, I think they’re pretty, but I thought that something that looked like a drawing was not enough after all.”

“It’s all right, that impression is correct. But, you know. My cookies have magic laid in them. You’ll see what magic as soon as they’re baked.”

I take the cookies out of the hearth. The smoke that blows out of it brought the scent of butter and roses into the air.

“Kurt-sama, I can smell the rose’s fragrance!”

“So the smell is a success. Next is the look. Now, look at these cookies. I won’t let you say that they’re awkward.”

The smoke starts clearing out, and reveals what I’ve taken out of the oven, which are...

“Such a beautiful rose pattern! In a lustrous light brown body as the background, there’s a black rose! I’m not bummed at all! It’s like a picture painted by the most famous artist!”

“Cookies change form once they’re baked. I made the dough that will make you anticipate if the change will occur when the dough is baked, as well as what the shape and color change will be.”



That's exactly my rose cookies' magic. The required skill for artisan cookies.

"How did you find out what was going to happen after they were baked?"

"It comes from my years of experience, and also intuition. You've praised its appearance, but I'm confident about the cookies' taste too, you know?"

My words make Tina's eyes sparkle as she looks at me. Her whole body conveys that she really wants to eat the cookie.

"Tina, after we've baked the second batch, shall we have some tea?"

"That's, something so delicious-looking being entrusted to me for later, that's just..."

While looking at Tina's entirely downhearted flatly pressed fox ears, I don't know whether to laugh or cry. However, this is a pastry that has the value to wait for. I'm sure she'll be happy.



A few minutes later, the two parts rose cookies, the white rose and black rose cookies, are completed. Tina and I take a sample. It gets a huge success rating from me, as well as from Tina. The last thing to do is to present this pastry to Marquis Fernandes and get him interested.

I told Marquis Fernandes' servant that the pastry gift for the duchess is done, and to tell his master that I wish he would taste the cookies soon.

With this, we've arrived at the real deal.

Chapter 10

The Fated Judgment

While Tina is making some herb tea, I stack the cookies on top of a plate.

The servant relayed to me that Marquis Fernandes was currently busy and needed to make some time and prepare himself, so I'm going to bring the cookies with me to the designated room.

I knock on the door.

"Come on in."

When I hear that reply, I enter the room.



"So, those are your pastry."

Marquis Fernandes rushes in high spirits to greet me, unbecoming of his age. I put the plate of rose cookies in front of him.

"Yes, these are my pastry."

"What will you call them?"

"Well, I straightforwardly called them Rose Cookies. There are white rose and the black rose varieties, please enjoy both of them."

The cookies are attractively arranged on both sides of the plate. I also add meringues as a bonus, made from turning egg whites into foam, adding sugar, and baking them... They are also shaped like roses and lined the edge of the plate.



"Hou, so you drew roses on the cookies! I wonder how you could make such things! They're truly beautiful!"

Marquis Fernandes speaks in astonishment after looking at the Rose Cookies.

"Moreover, this is such a wonderful scent. The scent of roses. No matter if you look or smell them, they're Rose Cookies. These will surely please the rose-loving Duchess Renalier."

"To please is my utmost objective. This scent appears thanks to the honey I used in the ingredients and the rose petals that I marinated all night long in liquor. The Rose Cookies are meant to have their scent enjoyed first, then their appearance, and finally their taste. By all means, please relish in the taste. Their true worth will be shown by being eaten the first time."

When I bow my head respectfully, Marquis Fernandes nods while looking satisfied.

"The main value of a pastry is the taste. If the taste is not up to par, everything will be for naught. We're talking about Kurt-kun here, so I'm certain the flavor will be wonderful. Then I'll enjoy them."

He takes a piece of Rose Cookies to his mouth. The first one is the black rose.

"Hou, such a refined flavor. This is completely different to the cookies I ate before; it's rich, flavorful, and complex. The texture is also interesting, it's soft and pleasing. I see, this is you being serious, isn't it?"

"I also gave it my all back then. It's simply that they served a different objective before. I aimed for luxury and gorgeousness with the black rose. A pastry befitting for nobles."

Yes, I only used wheat flour, honey, and butter for the previous cookies. That's the exact reason why they were determined by freshness and simplicity.

However, it's different this time.

Instead of daily ingredients, I aimed to treat someone in luxury. I used the deep flavor which came from marinating whiskey, the strong body of brown cane sugar that wouldn't lose to whiskey's flavor, and the highest quality of butter.

Neither are more superior than the other. It's just, as a present, the current ones should be more suitable.

"The one you have sampled just now is the black variety. Please, enjoy the white variety as well."

"Both varieties look similarly balanced between black and white, but... I see, so it's that, isn't it?"

Marquis Fernandes eats the white rose cookies, his eyes widen in surprise.

"Compared to the one I ate just now, it's more refreshing than refined. Even though they are made from the same ingredients, they can be different to this extent, aren't they?"

"You are right. The black roses are the gorgeousness that will force anyone to yield before them. Therefore, while they leave a soft texture, they have a strong flavor as a whole. On the other hand, the white roses are gentleness. To capture that light flavor, I didn't add as much strong-flavored ingredients. The texture is more crisp and light, so that the aftertaste will not linger."

That's the reason why I separated the dough into four parts. The dough for black roses was richly elegant, while the white roses' dough was lightly sweet.

"Wonderful, presenting both at once will make one unable to stop eating them. Enjoying the smell, the sight, the taste, no one can have enough of these. Being able to elevate a baked pastry to this extent... it's way beyond my imagination. Kurt-kun, you always easily surpass my expectations."

Marquis Fernandes gave me a rave review while stuffing his cheeks with cookies.

“What do you think, Marquis Fernandes? Did this pastry pass your evaluation?”

Marquis Fernandes grins widely after hearing my question.

“It did, obviously. These cookies can be stored for a long time, right?”

“Yes, the honey I kneaded into them has a powerful sterilization property. Since they lack water content as a baked pastry, they should be all right for two months.”

“That’s most wonderful. Then, let’s pack up our things, we’ll depart to the duchess’ place.”

I bow down. With this, I’ve completed one of my big tasks.

“Another thing, Kurt-kun. About your promised reward, the talk about recommending your younger brother, Jörg, as an attendant for a competent noble with a good character in a pioneering area, I have completed the necessary arrangements.”

He’s well prepared. I doubt that he ever thought that I would mess up in making the pastry or break his expectations. That’s why, he has already completed the arrangement even before eating that pastry.

“If I may inquire, who will my brother be sent to?”

“I chose Baron Frenhertz’s place.”

“*The* Baron Frenhertz? I’m really grateful. It is a tremendous help.”

I bow my head.

Rumors about that baron reached far, even to the Arnold fief. He has no shortcomings in competency or character. If it’s his place, I’m sure Jörg will be able to mature well.

Moreover, I also have another present for him other than the konpeitou, that I secretly kept even from him. He’ll realize it by himself soon enough. It will surely be of use for him.

“There’s no need to bow your head. This is the reward for your hard work, after all. Thank you for the best cookies. It’s impossible not to thank you for it.”

“I’m really grateful for your kind words.”

As I look up again, Marquis Fernandes wryly smiles.

“Now, it’s okay to go. You’re free to do anything until your engagement announcement tomorrow. You don’t have to return the remaining cost of the ingredients either, use it freely.”

“I don’t think that’s appropriate.”

“It’s all right. I’ve already gotten so much more than I paid for. Moreover, I’ll also think of how to compensate you for the trouble that my servant caused.”

“I humbly thank you.”

“Another thing, accept these. You can leave now. Your cute servant is already waiting impatiently for your return, thinking ‘Can I, can I now?’ about the cookies.”

Really, I can’t stomach this person. Tina, who restrains herself behind me, bashfully blushes hard.

After thanking him for the last time, I excuse myself from his room.”

Chapter 11

Heart Reflecting Croquembouche

The day of my engagement announcement arrived, just like that.

The party is being extravagantly held in the garden of Marquis Fernandes' mansion. Faruno has returned in the last minutes; she only showed her face in person at the party.

I was introduced by Marquis Fernandes, who stepped on a stage at the party. I requested to serve some pastries. I intended to convey what kind of person I was to them in this way. That was the reason why I baked some kind of pastries at my place yesterday.

It was a huge batch that took me seven hours. A pastry that befits the mood of a party. It should be able to amaze everyone here.

"Kurt-sama, it really suits you!"

"Thank you. I'm a little embarrassed, though."

Tina and I are in our borrowed room. I'm wearing a first-class tuxedo.

I actually brought my best clothes from Arnold just in case, but they don't seem up for the occasion of Marquis Fernandes' party. Therefore, I'm wearing the clothes that Marquis Fernandes prepared for me instead. The servants prepared them by fixing the clothes that the marquis himself wore in his youth, or so I heard. It doesn't seem like a common thing for the marquis to do; the servants told me that there was a special meaning in the gesture.

"It's good that I'm not outdone by the clothes. It feels a bit embarrassing to wear something this nice."

"It's not like that at all! It's a perfect fit!"

Tina's words aren't just flattery; I notice from how excited she looks now. Right now

she's wearing the same clothes as the servants of Fernandes. The maid clothes really draws out Tina's cuteness.

"Tina looks really cute too. Maybe I should request those clothes to be brought with us."

"That, that'll be awesome."

"If I do, it seems that I'll get them without getting a bat of an eye, if it's him."

There's nothing to lose, so let's try asking.

It's for the sake of enjoying the cute Tina from now on as well.



I go to the venue; the party is about to start. There are a lot of terribly extravagant faces lining up. Marquesses, counts, and other important nobles seem so common here. Let alone being in the same party, even striking a conversation with them was something that had to be thought carefully, initially.

There are naturally their sons of appropriate age at their side, with their sons' wife greeting with Faruno, hoping to strengthen their bonds with Marquis Fernandes.

If there is someone among them who would want to kill me, it wouldn't be surprising.

My engagement with Faruno was *that* abnormal.

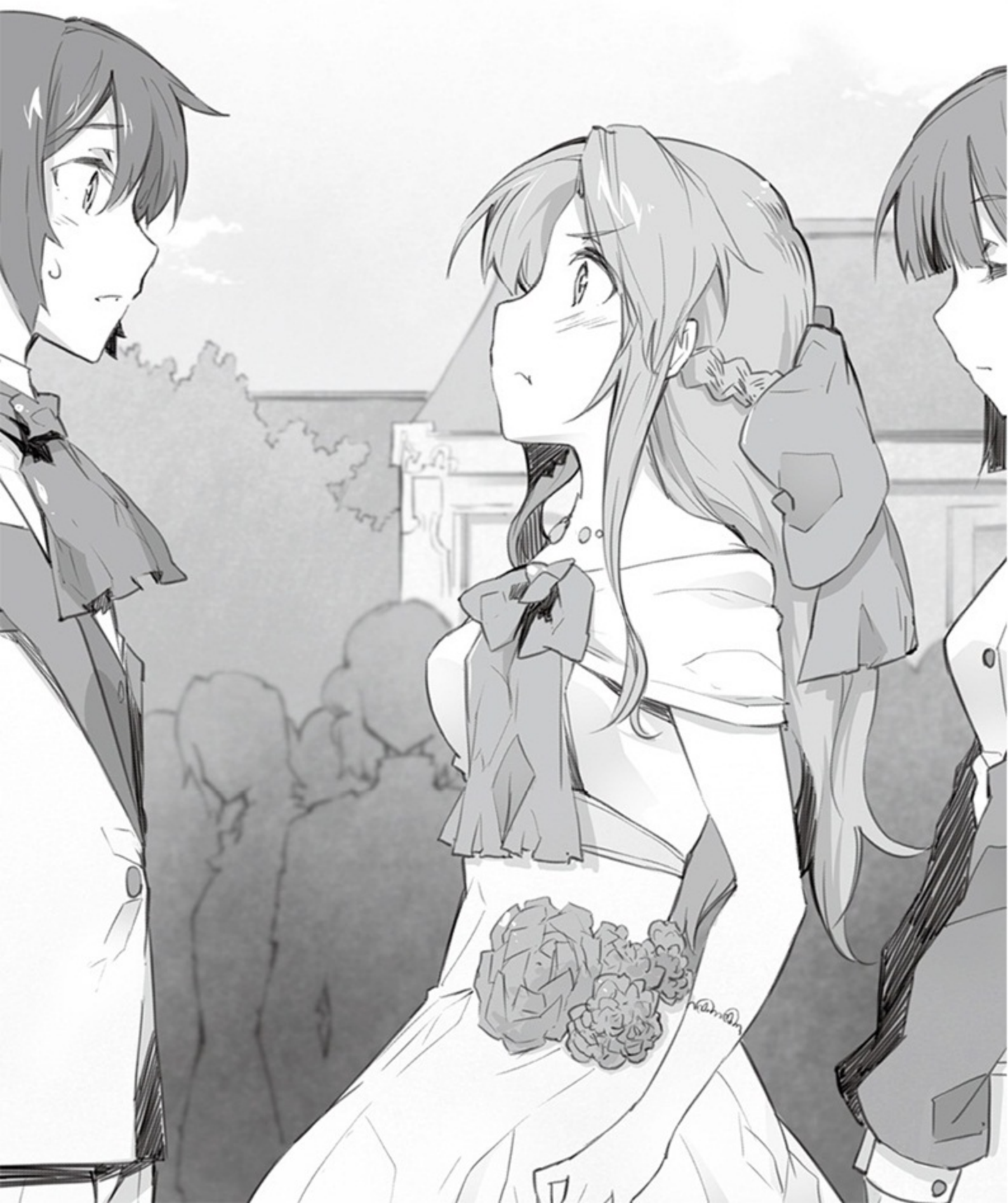
"Kurt-sama, you've come!"

Faruno showed up while bringing her servants. She has also made some followers of the nobles' sons and daughters. However, they couldn't start a conversation with Faruno. In this kind of party, a lower ranked scion is strictly forbidden from starting a conversation with scions of higher stands. Everyone is waiting for Faruno to start talking to them first.

"Ah, likewise. I deeply apologize for brazenly disturbing you."

"There's absolutely no such thing! Otou-sama is really cruel! Kurt-sama's rose cookies. They're all gone out of those being presented for the duchess, leaving me with nothing

whatsoever! Then he bragged about how proud he was for the wonderful pastry! That was the true cruelty, wouldn't you think so!?"



Faruno puffs her cheeks in anger. I can only bitterly smile in response.

“So you’ve been looking forward to my pastry. In that case, before going home, I’ll bake them once more. I still have some portions of ingredients left.”

As I said so, Faruno blooms into smile then looks embarrassed.

“I, I am truly happy, but I didn’t mean to come out as demanding. I’m not that kind of woman, you see?”

“Yes, I understand. I merely wish to bake it for your sake. For the sake of a wonderful lady, I’ll bake the pastry. As a pastry chef, there is no higher pleasure than this, you see.”

Faruno’s face turns deep red this time.

The surrounding male scions glare at me, while the young ladies squeal uncontrollably with red faces upon our interaction.

It’s a bit tiring. I cannot keep up with the mood in this kind of setting.



After talking for some time, Faruno and I make our rounds greeting others. I must go around and greet the influential people here. I leave it to Faruno to decide whom to talk to. I am a simple son of a baronet. Within these people, there is no one who will be glad to speak to me first.

The characteristics of the nobles speaking with me are divided into three patterns. The first ones are those who praise me in order to flatter themselves up in front of Faruno. The second show indirect sarcasm. The third are spear experts who are astonished and curious about the famous Arnold descendant.

These are within expectations.

After one round, I finally have some leeway to look around.

This is a luxurious party that can only be hosted by Marquis Fernandes. My fief can’t even begin to compare with this. Delectable food, delicious wine, they disappear fast into the bellies of the nobles with discerning palates.

When the party reached the end, Marquis Fernandes, the organizer, finally showed up.

“I humbly thank all of you who have come to my daughter’s, Faruno’s, engagement party today. For the sake of bringing joy to all of you, we put our best into this event. Have you enjoyed yourself?”

As expected of an aristocrat. There are no rowdy yells here. However, with cheerful expressions, they all convey how great a party hosted by Marquis Fernandes is.

「そろそろ、
このパーティの
主賓を紹介しよう。
壇上に来てくれないか、
クルトくん、ファルノ」

アルフレート・フェルナンデ

ファルノ・フェルナンデ

“If you’ve enjoyed it, it is our utmost pleasure. Now let me introduce you to this party’s guests of honor. Will you bestow me the honor to receive you up on the stage, Kurt-kun, Faruno?”

Faruno and I head over to Marquis Fernandes together. The crowd splits to make way for us in that direction.

“First, let’s begin with my introduction on their behalf. He is the heir of Arnold Baronetcy, Kurt Arnold-kun.”

In an instant, the eyes of the crowd all gather on me.

“Kurt-kun is an extremely bright young man who has just began his own pioneering village this year. Not only that, he’s also the strongest Arnold in the young generation.”

The strongest Arnold.

That means the strongest spear wielder. The largest praise given to someone who is skilled in spear without using mana.

“He’s also an exceptional mana wielder. As an Arnold, he possesses the power that comes both from his physical strength and mana.”

The surrounding eyes on me change their looks.

By wielding a special weapon, I can transcend humanity, and that is on top of having the power of mana. That makes my value immeasurable. In that case, a marquiss daughter’s betrothal to me becomes less abnormal than it was before.

“Excellent feudal lord, wielding the mystical power of mana along with the Arnold’s spear. Up to this, this is how I will explain this, but there’s another mystical power that Kurt-kun has. Ah, no, that’s not quite right. This is actually *the* greatest mystical power of Kurt-kun.”

The crowd of the nobles start to stir up some commotion.

There’s still more? Shock, uneasiness, and then, expectations, all start to brew. Then, after turning the temperature of the venue up to the limit, Marquis Fernandes looks at me, presenting the highest hurdle.

I can tell that I have to make my own greetings from now.

It's a mess.

However, this is something that I must do.

"I am extremely honored for the introduction. My name is Kurt Arnold. Thank you for gathering to celebrate my engagement to Faruno-sama on this occasion."

First is the pleasantries.

"What Marquis Fernandes named as my greatest mystical power is my pastry making skill."

In the instant I said that, the nobles' expectation turns into dejection. They look at me with skeptical eyes, accusing me of saying nonsense.

Marquis Fernandes keeps grinning from ear to ear. He's a real horrible man.

"More than words, the pastries will speak for themselves. That is my conviction. Therefore, let me introduce you to the pastry. This is the pastry that I made for the sake of this day."

As I said that, Fernandes servants came and pushed a desk forward. On the desk, there is a large tree-like figure.

Yes, tree. Built up from the petite *choux à la crème* with crisp skin, glued together by caramel, it's a gigantic tree that's taller than even my body. Its other name is croquembouche.

It's a standard celebration pastry on earth.

The crowd's eyes are stolen by that giant pastry. The petite cream puffs tree is placed in front of the stage.

"I deeply apologize for surprising all of you. It should be your first time to see this kind of pastry. And, this pastry is still not finished. Let me bring it to completion right now."

As I said so, Tina brought a saucepan to me. There is caramelized sugar inside. That, and a special utensil.

“Please keep watching. I shall now make golden snow fall.”

Above the stage, I raise the special caramel-laced tool overhead. As I do so, the caramelized sugar turns into gold threads, falling all over the petite cream puff tower. The gold threads overlap each other layer by layer over, blanketing the petite cream puff tower, building the so-called sugar sculpture.

“So pretty.”

Someone murmured like that dumbfoundedly.

Sparkling golden thread paints the petite cream puff tower with a gorgeous color.



“It is now complete. Honored guests, please enjoy my pastry. This pastry itself is my introduction.”

That is the end of my greeting speech.

Several nobles approach the cream puff tower without being able to curb down their curiosity, then someone plucks one of them and puts it into their mouth.

“It’s similar to bread, no, it’s different. It’s more crisp, ooh, the inside is fluffy and there is a generous amount of cream at the core... interesting, this sensation, it’s the first time for me. Fluffy and light airy cream. This, how to call this refreshing feeling, it feels that I can eat no matter how much.”

What he ate was choux à la crème filled with cream that was whipped to its utmost lightness. The sweetness comes from the gentle sweetness of honey. The refreshing taste discretely comes from lemon juice, just a hint of it that no one will realize it.

“Ooh, what a rich taste. One is not sufficient at all. Cream with a taste of eggs, moreover, is it wine? There’s only a small amount of it, but this is such a gorgeous flavor.”

What he ate was choux à la crème filled with custard cream with layers of umami flavor. The strong sweetness comes from unrefined brown sugar that won’t lose to the custard. Moreover, I stacked more umami by meticulously folding rum into the custard cream.

“What richness, you have to be blind not to taste the refreshing flavor of this pastry.”

“Likewise, what are you saying? This kind of deep umami flavor can only be represented with this pastry.”

““Don’t tell me there are two kinds of them?””

Both of them started plucking the other kind of cream puffs with their hands. As one starts taking them, other people gather to follow.

Once they find out that there are two kinds of cream puffs, more cream puffs are taken away from the tree.

Drawing the concept from white rose and black rose, I came up with the collaboration of rich choux à la crème and refreshing choux à la crème that people won’t ever get tired of.

Even with just them, the huge tower has disappeared God knows since when. All of a sudden, everything has disappeared into everyone’s stomachs. On the corner of those refined aristocrats’s mouths, there are spots of cream.

Everyone looks at each other’s mouths before examining their own, and fall into smiles. It seems that they’re so into the pastry that they’ve forgotten their senses of selves.

“Now then, have you enjoyed my pastry? This is me. Coming from common ingredients, the profound dual side of light and deep flavors. This is who I am.”

I bow my head.

As I do so, the crowd cheers with pleased laughs and applause. Being made happy is the best.

With my eyes, I let Faruno know that it's her turn now. Faruno takes a step forward.

Her face is smiling, but it looks scary, somehow.

"Honored guests, it is my privilege to have a warm welcome for my fiancée, Kurt-sama. As his fiancée, I feel proud of him as well."

Her voice isn't joyful though.

"Kurt-sama is a wonderful person. There is no mistake whatsoever in my father's words about him. However, there is one thing that I cannot forgive about him no matter what."

My back is drenched in cold sweat. What kind of mistake did I do to make her angry?

"He didn't let me eat his proud creation of pastries at all! Before today, he made the wonderful rose cookies, but not only did he allow only my esteemed father to eat them, he made a wonderful cream pastry this time, but he only let all of you to have a taste. Isn't he cruel? What do you think, everyone?"

Then, she grins mischievously. The second her speech is over, the nobles fall into laughter.

Really, what is this fellow saying?

My eyes met with Faruno's. Faruno also let out a laughter. It must be infectious since I also burst into a huge laughter.

I don't think there's any other engagement party as gleeful as this up until now. Amidst the victory, the engagement party is wrapped up.

Chapter 12

A Date with Faruno and Eclaba's Darkness

After the engagement party ended in a huge success, I took my time having plenty of rest in the Fernandes manor. Around dinner time, I put up a request for Marquis Fernandes to plan an immigration recruitment proposal to the Arnold fief. People should gather in about a month, most likely. This way, the Arnold fief will go into a huge development stage.

After talking to Marquis Fernandes and Faruno, I will bring her to my territory in a week. Faruno happily said that the mansion that she built in my village should be able to be finished by then.

Volg is working hard right now as well, for sure, in completing the mansion.

"Kurt-sama, this is a date after all, so please wear a happy smile."

"My apologies, Faruno-sama."

Since she will be leaving in a week, Faruno took a tour around Eclaba.

"Is it really okay for me to tag along? Kurt-sama, Faruno-sama?" Walking behind me, Tina looks deeply apologetic while asking that question.

"I told you, it's really all right. Kurt-sama won't be able to enjoy the trip if you are being left behind. It's better if you come with us like this."

Tina initially wanted to busy herself. However, Faruno said that she had planned to bring her along as well. In her words, it's better to *steal me** fair and square, she won't use underhanded means at all. It sounds more like a man's way of thinking.

"Faruno-sama, I wish to escort you, but regretfully I'm really not familiar with this area. I have absolutely no idea where to bring you to let you enjoy the trip in the city."

"Leave me with that task, Kurt-sama. This place is my backyard, I will take you around to wonderful places."

Faruno takes and holds my hand. Surprisingly, she sounds promising.

“Also, Kurt-sama, please drop the honorary speech. You’re the man who will become my husband. Moreover, it’s already officially recognized. From now on, please speak to me like you speak to Tina-san.”

We are betrothed in name only, it’s not decided if we’re going through marriage; Faruno has expressed that she understood that nature, if I recall correctly.

“However, our statuses-”

“Before being a marquis’ daughter, I am your fiancée. Therefore, your standing is higher than mine.”

“.....Understood. Let’s speak more casually from now on.”

When I said so, Faruno gave me a satisfied smile.

“Yes, you are more charming when speaking that way. Please do so from now on. Now, there is a theater that I really like in that direction. The program they’re showing this time is a tale of a legendary heroes party, [*Maken no Shippo* (The Magic Sword’s Tail)]. It sounds delightful.”

“It does sound interesting.”

Faruno looks festive. Oh, well, isn’t it okay? If she can become happy with that, I’m relieved. As I think so, Faruno bumps into a boy with small stature.

“Ah, I’m sorry.” Faruno staggers, making the boy look worried and open his mouth like that.

“No, please don’t be worried, are you wounded?”

“...Not at all. I’m going now.”

The boy disappears after the short apology.

“Faruno, are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m fine. I was too excited before.”

Faruno looks embarrassed from her antics.

“It’s okay to be excited, but pay attention to things in front of you, okay?”

“Indeed I should..... ah.”

Faruno’s face become pale.

“Did something happen?”

“It’s just my prediction, but that boy could be a pickpocket. It seems he has stolen my pouch.”

“Is that so?”

So that’s why he seemed awfully hurried to get away from here after bumping into her. In that split second, he had already stolen the pouch with the dexterity of his hand. This shouldn’t be his first time doing this criminal act.

“Tina, I’ll leave Faruno to you. I’m going to chase that kid now.”

“Understood. Leave Faruno-sama to me.”

With Tina and her ability to use magic, I can feel relieved.

“Kurt-sama, I’ll leave it to you. The money itself isn’t important, the pouch itself is a precious gift from my father.”

“I understand, I’m leaving now.”

I hurry, aiming to run past the boy. I’m confident in the strength of my memory. I’ll surely be able to find him soon.



After running full speed, I can somehow spot the boy who bumped into Faruno before. Noticing me, the boy frantically made his run, but I easily catch him in a deserted back alley.



“Let go, let me go!”

“If you return the pouch you took earlier, I’ll let you go.”

“Whatcha talking about, I dunno nothing!”

He seems to plan on playing dumb to the bitter end. With a wry smile, I search into his pocket and grab the pouch Faruno used before.

“This is my companion’s belonging. I’ll take it back.”

“Ah!”

The boy covers his head after realizing that he’s caught red-handed.

“Kurt-sama!”

In that moment, Tina arrives. Faruno is following behind.

“Tina, why are you here?”

“Faruno-sama asked to be brought here... I caught Kurt-sama’s scent.”

Tina and her sharp nose. If it’s to look for my scent that she’s really familiar with, she can find me no matter how far we’re apart.

“Then it cannot be helped. Faruno, I’ve taken back your pouch.”

I release the boy, then hand over the pouch to Faruno.

“Thank you very much. Kurt-sama, you’ve returned this precious pouch to me.” Faruno holds the pouch close and gives it a squeeze.

The boy looks at us with loathing eyes.

“Won’t you give me to the guards?”

“That kind of thing sounds too troublesome. You may make your escape now.”

I want to avoid having to drag the boy against his will or spend time on an investigation

if I can.

“That so? Then, I’ll take my leave here.”

When the boy said so, several boys and girls showed up.

“Hey, Johann! Mille... Mille is done over. She’s badly hurt! Come, hurry!”

“There’s blood everywhere, she’s going to die at this rate!”

“She was beaten severely by a scary man, and *that* was taken!”

Those boys and girls took turns in speaking up, making the boy turn pallid.

“Mille!? Shit, take me there quickly!”

Then he starts running with the group who came here for him.

From the start, I already knew what kind of children they are from their looks and actions. A group of orphans, in order to buy food, they even resort to criminal conduct like pickpocketing, creating the harsh look in their eyes. They’re paying for their mistakes, I have no duty to lend a hand.

But...

“Kurt-sama,” Faruno looks straight into my eyes. She’s most likely thinking to chase after them and help the girl named Mille.

I wryly smile.

“I’ll say this clearly: I have nothing but bad feelings about this.”

“Even so. I need to know what is happening in my town.”

Her gaze is full of determination. There’s nothing else I can say in front of them.

“I know. We’ll chase them. Tina!”

“Kurt-sama, it’s fine. I’ve burned their smell to my memory.”

If it's just me, I can simply chase after them. But there's also Faruno. I shall follow them by relying on the smell that Tina memorized this time.

I've thought about dropping off Faruno who cannot fight, but since both Tina and I are here, it should be all right.

Chapter 13

Miracle and Compensation

We tracked the boy down, and the sight made us feel nauseated.

“This is, so cruel.”

A ten year old girl is collapsed on the ground, covered with bruises and blood gashing out all over her body. Most likely, she was beaten by more than a couple of adults. There are several children gathering around and calling her. The boy who stole Faruno’s pouch is there too.

“Oi, wake up, Mille! Mille, come on!” The boy frantically jolts the battered body of the girl.

I step behind him and stop his swaying.

“What are you doing, old man!?”

“Who’s an old man!? I’m only fifteen!”

“That’s still old!”

Those ten year old kids can only see it that way, huh?

“Nevermind. Her head probably got hit too. Don’t rock her, you’ll only make it worse.” My tone leaves no room for refusal, so he can only stop and take a step back.

“Tha-that’s, no way, oi, you, are you a doctor?”

“I’m not, but I have some understanding in this area.”

I’ve read a considerable amount of doctor-related books, and because there is no doctor in the pioneering village, my experience in dealing with medical care has been stacking up.

“I beg you. Please, please save Mille!”

“I’m planning to do that. That’s why I followed you here. Letting a child die leaves a bad taste, after all.”

I lift the girl’s upper torso, continuing the medical examination. Clearly, this is the worst that could happen. Her ribs are fractured, piercing into her lungs. Moreover, I can see that the bone fractures occur all over her body, leaving inner bleeding in her viscera.

“Oi, how is it? Can you make her better?”

“It’ll be too late to use normal means.”

I reply while applying emergency measures. No matter how excellent of a doctor he can find, in a situation of this scale, she cannot be healed. She can only wait for her death.

My words drained the color from the boy’s face.

“Why, why!? Mille mustn’t die.”

“And aren’t you the one who knows that better than anyone?”

I curtly reply to the boy’s laments.

“...What are you saying?”

“I’m saying that it’s a retribution coming back to your ass.”

“Th, that’s, we’re just doing anything we can to stay alive.”

I exhausted all the knowledge of normal medical care that I knew to generally use stopgap measures. From now onward, if I don’t use my magic, there’s nothing else that I can do.

“I’ve done everything that I can, more or less.”

“I have to thank you. Mille’s face has regained some color.”

“There’s no need to thank me, because I didn’t save her. I only made her condition a bit easier. The only thing that awaits her is still death.”

It’s saddening but this is the limit.

“Still, thank you. I’m happy that you still did your best for her, even just a little bit.” The boy clenches his fist. “Oi, you.”

He looks at me with imploring eyes.

“Before, you said that she couldn’t be healed with normal means. So is there other means that’s not normal?”

Hou, he was quick to catch onto my words even in that kind of situation. Indeed, if it’s me, I have a way to cure her.

“Indeed, I have a way.”

“Then please save her. I’ll do anything; anything that I can do, I will. If you want to work my ass off, I will. If you want money, with enough time I can collect it. So, please, save Mille.”

He does a *dogeza*. The other boys and girls are also bowing down deeply.

I take a deep breath.

I’m naive. I don’t have the power to throw them away here like this.

“Before I make my decision, tell me, how did she get into this state?”

First, let’s get that issue cleared.

“Mille... no, everyone here, we’re entrusted by an acquaintance to sell some drugs.”

“Narcotics?”

“Yeah, those. Mille lost the bag that carried the drugs. Maybe, just maybe, someone assaulted her and took them forcibly because they didn’t have money to buy them. Since she resisted, she became like this. I think she desperately resisted because if the drugs were taken away, they would kill her for sure.”

“You’re a pickpocket, she’s a drug seller... Why on earth would you do this?”

I know that’s a meaningless question, but I still ask him. The answer is already obvious.

“To stay alive. We’re all orphans. I gathered the bunch without relatives, accepted some jobs, and we live like this.”

As I thought.

Pickpocket and drug seller. There are people in the shadows who probably exploit these children.

“That’s impossible. There are orphanages in this town. How would there be children who need to do these kind of things to survive?” Faruno bites her lips.

“That’s the way it is. It’s unbelievable to you, but we’re going to get killed in that place... There are many among us who escaped from there! We didn’t get anything to eat, we would get beaten up, and there were worse things there.”

“But that’s still better than this kind of life, I’m sure.”

“It’s because we have it better here that we escaped. We definitely won’t go back to the orphanage!”

The boy shouts, interrupting Faruno’s words.

No matter in what era, these kinds of things exists. There were those who would open an orphanage for the financial aid, then getting the children to do heavy labor or treating them like toys.

A common practice.

“Faruno, it’s the reality. Accept it. If you still don’t believe it, get them to tell you which orphanage it is later on, then dispatch a spy there. That will make this matter clear.”

That’s for the best. What happens afterwards will be up to Faruno to decide.

“Yes, I will do so. I wish to know the truth.”

Now I'm pressed to make *my* decision. There's a way to make everyone happy.

"I'll ask you brat one thing."

"It's not brat. It's Johann."

"Okay. Johann, are you the leader of these kids?"

"Yeah, they all listen to me."

"And you all do things like pickpocketing or selling drugs?"

"That's right, we can only live in this town by doing that."

The boy answers with obvious guilt in his voice.

Not all hope is lost for them, then.

"Faruno, can I ask you one thing? I intend to recruit people for my pioneering village in this town."

"Kurt-sama, are you saying what I think!?" Faruno's eyes are wide open in surprise.

"Is it okay to bring these kids to my village? Will Marquis Fernandes allow me to do so?"

Immigration requires some procedures. Frankly, I don't know how to proceed in case of immigrating children without any relatives. Adopting them into my village is for the sake of me being responsible for them. Even if I help them right here and now, they'll lose their lives anyhow. If I want to extend my hand to them, I must see it through until the end.

"...That will be difficult... No, I will personally get my father to approve it."

"Is that so? Then, I'm glad."

With her words, the issue of formalities is settled, as well as the matter of Faruno's will.

Now, it's just about what I want to do. And, what these kids wish to do.

“Johann, my condition to save this girl is to have you to lead all of the kids here to move to the village I govern and do the labors there.”

The children all take a sharp breath in. I must have looked like slave trader to them.

“Are we forced to work there?”

“I will make you work. However, I don’t intend to exploit you. Right now, you’ll do about the same amount of work as the villagers, you’ll get about the same amount of food as them. It’s a poor village, but I won’t let you starve. I promise you that it’ll be better than what you have now.”

“You lied, didn’t you? You think it’s okay to make the children work until we break. You think that we’re just tools. You’re definitely going to use us until we die... Hey, can you allow just me to do that? I can endure any job you put me through, I’ll work as hard as many people at once. So, please, save Mille. Spare all the others.”

Johann, who’s already in *dogeza* position, deepens his bow until his forehead touches the ground.

I took a liking to this boy already. A person who’ll go this far for the sake of his comrades is rare. He’s young, but he’s a good man.

“I won’t accept it. It has to be everyone. If I take you, their leader, away, do you think that these kids will have a good life to begin with? They’ll continue living this kind of life; there will be others who suffer Mille’s fate. In that case, don’t you think it’s better to give them a new lease on life instead?”

Johann gives a hesitating look upon my question. There’s no way that their current life feels good for them. He at least knows that much.

“Johann, I will go with you. I won’t let you go alone.”

“I’m going too. I’ll go to hell if it’s with you, Johann.”

“I’m scared but I will go with everyone.”

The children shout with a strange tension. Seeing them, Johann finally comes into his determination.

“I got it. Everyone, let’s go to hell together!”

“Yeah.”

“Yes!”

“Oou!”

The children cheer in a loud and heated manner.

Looking at these children, there is a single person who gets mad. Yes, that’s the person behind me.

“What kind of trash talk is that!? Kurt-sama is definitely not that kind of person! Kurt-sama definitely won’t lie! He’ll definitely bring happiness to everyone!!”

Tina is the one who gets mad. Her tail fur bristles up as she cries angrily.

“Your kind of people won’t get how we feel.”

“True, true!”

“Saying that while wearing those kinds of nice clothes!”

The children take the chance to counter her words. They must have seen Tina like some kind of young lady.

“I do understand! Because I’m a fox beastkin! Kurt-sama picked me up and made me happy! I won’t forgive anyone who talks bad about the kind Kurt-sama!”

“Isn’t that because nee-chan is pretty?”

“That’s right, you’re beautiful.”

“His goal is your body.”

Kids nowadays are really mature.

“What kind of nonsense is that!? Kurt-sama doesn’t do perverted things to me, ever! He never even kisses me! He treats me precious! He’s a gentle person!”

Tina denies vehemently. And after a passionate shout, she blushes to deep red.

Honestly, what a clumsy girl. But that's what makes her so precious.

"Putting aside Tina's words, my village truly lacks people. Those who are willing to work arduously will be warmly welcomed, and there are rewards for those who bring good results. So please decide upon that notion."

"...We've told you our answer just now. We'll go. We're not hesitating either. From that nee-chan's words, we want to go even if Mille's not in this situation."

That answer is enough for me. I take a deep breath. Then, I reach into my bag and take out a black bead.

"Nii-chan, is that...?"

"This is a legendary medicine that will be able to cure any illness, any wounds in a second."

"There's no such thing."

"There is. Right now, I'll use it for Mille. You can look and see for yourself."

I make a serious look, then I bring the black lump to Mille's lips with trembling hand.

"Nii-chan, your hand is shaking, you know?"

"Well. To be honest, I'm still hesitating. This is a legendary medicine, after all. I probably won't be able to obtain a second one. It can cure any wounds or illness. This kind of medicine doesn't have a market price. If I sell it, I can have all the money I need to live luxuriously all my life."

All the people in this place hold their breath.

Oh, well, if there's such a thing, I can enjoy a luxurious life. But that's a big fat lie. It's just a lump of brown sugar. But there's no way that I can reveal my Heal right here, especially in front of Faruno. That's why I'm acting like the medicine is real.

"Using such a valuable medicine for our sake..."

“Of course I’ll do this much. You’ll become my new comrades in my village.”

“You, it turns out that you’re a really good person.”

The children are crying.

Oh, well, I might as well get this debt of gratitude from them.

I put the black lump into Mille’s mouth. At the same time, I use Heal on her, curing her wounds, but of course, I won’t let her gain mana power.

She slowly opens her eyes.

“Eh? I, I was hit a lot of times, I thought I died.”

She props herself up. Johann glomps at her with tearful face right after.

“Mille, I’m so glad, I’m really glad that you didn’t die!”

He squeezes her and starts sobbing childishly. The other children are affected and start crying too.

They’ll become my new comrades. Their bonds will surely become useful for the development of my village.

Chapter 14

New Comrades

“Honestly, you really surprised me. To even take away the orphan children to your village.”

At last, it's time to depart. We're going home to my village. In front of the Fernandes manor, Marquis Fernandes sends us off.

“My apologies. You've graced us with a well prepared immigration recruitment notice, but I selfishly asked you to drop the quota all of a sudden.”

After obtaining the orphan children, the number of people needed for the important duties dropped. I cannot afford to chew more immigrants than I can swallow either. Reducing the number in the eleventh hour made me impose on Marquis Fernandes.

“Don't mind the small things. As I heard correctly, it's our family's Faruno's fault. However, you've changed as well, haven't you? If you completely rely on me, you can summon more adults with agricultural experience and stamina. You take the orphans in order to help them. You seem to become a man of character.”

I laugh before shaking my head.

“It's something I decided with sound reasons. The young can absorb more. Moreover, they have a strong bond. The teamwork born from that bond can already compensate for the lack of experience and manpower.”

With Johann in the center, there are twenty children. They take his lead in concise manner. If I leave it to Johann, it'll become a great line of command.

The greatest issue in an immigration recruitment is the inability to form leadership in the pool of people who come from different places, or rather, the inability to give preferential treatment to someone, or rather, to be surrounded by harsh works only. There'll be much dissatisfaction surfacing forth.

Furthermore, a great half of the immigrants will be wishing to return to their

hometowns, no matter how good the lifestyle that the new place offers. I won't worry about this point from these children.

"I see, so it's like that."

"There's more. I also need to bring happiness to the other village's inhabitants. These children don't have anywhere else to call home. Those who don't have a place to belong will wish for one, won't they?"

In summary, I'm not a philanthropist. Still, as long as there's a good balance of benefit for me, I do wish to bring happiness to everyone.

"Kurt-sama, I've become more charmed by you from this occasion, really. For the sake of one girl, you've not only used a valuable medicine, you don't just help these children temporarily, but give them the chance of a lifetime. As expected of my future husband."

Faruno's eyes sparkle like a young woman in love, making me unable to respond with anything but a wry smile. This is out of my calculations. To think that she'll believe my lie. Faruno really thinks that I used a miraculous medicine to cure the orphan girl.

Marquis Fernandes smiles bitterly. He couldn't have possibly drawn the conclusion that I cured the girl through Magic, but he must have seen through the sleight of hand, one way or another.

"Kurt-*aniki*, our preparations here are done!"

"Thanks for the hard work, Johann!"

The children's leader, Johann, has arranged the children to climb into the horse carriage. Since that time, we've been talking about various things and opened our hearts. Johann doesn't only fill the role of the leader for the children, he's also a brilliant thinker and has the experience on the better part of society. He's someone I can rely on. In the near future, I can see him becoming my right hand man.

With this, the only thing left is to go home.

"Well, then, Marquis Fernandes, Faruno-sama, I've been imposing on you for a long time."

"Likewise, it's been a joy to have you around."

“Kurt-sama, I will also set off to your village next week! I will definitely let the orphanage matter become settled satisfactorily by those of whom are responsible!”

Faruno was completely shocked by the orphanage incident. She seems to have gone through the children’s statements thoroughly and is currently investigating the matter. She has also investigated the whereabouts of the bunch who made the children sell drugs for them.

She should be able to handle it well.

With that, we set off to our own village.



After a long while of shaking carriage travel, we’ve finally arrived in the village that I’ve longed to see. The carriage gallops to a stop before the children climb down one after another.

“Kurt-aniki, this is our village from now on, right?”

“That’s right. Be prepared, because I’ll have you work hard from now on.”

“Of course, that’s the plan, right, everyone?”

When Johann asks the children, everyone loudly cheers in response.

“Oh, *bou-chan*, you’ve come back home.”

Salt comes approaching. When I’m not around, he’s the great person that I rely on to manage this village.

“You’ve come with a bountiful harvest, I see.”

“Salt, I’ll introduce them. These children are the newcomers of this village. Let them take the full time job of the beekeeping that we’ve talked about before.”

“Ou, I got it. When I heard that new villagers were coming in, I prepared some new places to reside. I wonder if they’re enough, though... I didn’t think that there’ll be this many.”

“We’ll manage, somehow.”

The plan was to accept five new families into this village. We keep adding new shacks in the village while taking newcomer families into account.

“Johann, bring everyone here, I’ll take you to your new homes.”

“Got it, Kurt-aniki.”

With that, I went to bring the children to their new places.



“Lining up here are five houses that will become your new place. I’ll leave the arrangements to yourselves.”

While I’m speaking, the children already chatter enthusiastically, deciding on their own houses, who knows since when. As expected of those who can only rely on each other to survive, their teamwork is good.

“It’s awesome, Johann! Everyone has his own bed!”

“There’s no hole in the ceiling, no ticks jumping around either!”

“There are proper windows!”

“The wind isn’t entering the house and the wood doesn’t stink!”

Those are incredibly trivial things to be happy about. They must have lived an extremely harsh life before this.

“You’ll be provided with a food supply each month, so you’ll have to get by on your own. Watch how much you eat compared to how hard you work.”

As if on cue, there are villagers bringing in the food supply for them. Wheat, all kinds of vegetables, and beef jerky portions on top of that. Other than them, there are also clothes. It’s the cheapest kind, but they’re still important.

“Johann, I need to confirm with you, can you guys actually cook?”

“Oi, nii-chan. If we couldn’t, we would’ve already kicked the bucket a long time ago, y’know. Us children stay afloat by ourselves, see? But is it really okay to receive all this food and stuff once a month?”

Johann is trembling all over while looking at the monthly supply.

“Of course it’s okay, isn’t it obvious? The stuff that gets easily rotten and the game provided by the hunters will be delivered as we obtain them. I have to say this again, but this is the supply for a month, okay? I don’t want to hear you crying if they’re all gone before the next supply comes in.”

“Understood. If we have these, we won’t starve. Mille, you’ll be our head cook. Count the exact portions we need, okay?”

“Okay. *Un*, with this amount, we can survive for two months, even!”

That’s the girl I healed before. She seems like a bright child, so she must have said it after doing a mental calculation.

“Then, remember to start working tomorrow. Today, just settle down in your new place and rest up. Tina, you’re their trainer. Tell them everything they need to know about looking after the bees. Train Johann intensively at first, then Johann can relay your teachings to the others.”

“I understand Kurt-sama. I will complete the task perfectly! I’ll teach them the way of living in this village too, so please rest assured!”

Tina squeezes both her hands with some strength. I smile wryly.

When I lent a hand to these children, Tina strongly wished to help the children, even more than Faruno. She must have related to them as orphans.

With them and Tina doing the labor, increasing the number of bees won’t be any problem. Our honey production will take a leap in one breath. Adding bees means we have to expand the raspberry garden as well. There are a lot of work to do. However, now we have the workers to meet the job demand.

From now on, this village will grow in prosperity.

When I see the smiles of the children, I become really confident in that.

Let's do our best from now on as well!

Chapter 15

Reunion with Faruno

Early in the morning, I dashed at full speed.

It was a genuine full speed sprint. In other words, I used both my skill and mana. It means that I drew out all of my ability to its utmost limit.

Shadowing my full dash is Faruno's butler, Volg.

As usual, he never fails to wear his butler suit while training me. He's holding a short sword, jumping from one tree branch to the next.

"Ha!"

Then, he kicks the tree branch to roll over here, making a leap easily.

In order to disrupt his movement, I stop my leg and thrust out my trusted buddy, Ginsen. However, he has predicted my movement and spun his body in mid-air, reaching out towards my chest.

Without panicking, I pick Ginsen up and swing it. It's a counter against Volg's attack towards my chest. He parries with his short sword, then jumps behind in that state, redirecting all the recoil resulting from the counter attack.

He creates some distance in that state, then I lost his shadow.

I close my eyes and concentrate with my senses.

This is the middle of the forest. There are many covers for his tracks.

I heard the leaves rustling. When I focus my senses in that direction, I found nothing. A rock must have hit something there.

In that case, Volg must have been in the direct opposite of that direction. I turn that way, keeping a low posture. Volg has been crawling on the ground undetected.

It's the second counter attack.

This time, Volg closes in while stopping Ginsen and parrying the attack. Keeping the initiative on his side, he makes a two-point attack. I receive the attack using Ginsen's belly.

Before the pursuit, I've been kicked in the stomach, so it's a follow up of that kick.

Volg, cutting with his short sword.

With this, the sounds of clashing of weapons keeps resounding in the forest.



"Volg, thank you. I can move my body more properly thanks to you."

After the morning intensive training ended, I express my gratitude to Volg while drinking some water.

"Not at all, my physical ability is also growing thanks to you. Indeed, you're going through a terrifying growth rate. I might have narrowly won today, but if I am the man I was when we first met, I definitely would have lost... At this rate, I'll probably lose against you in the near future." Volg smiles thinly.

I don't deny his words. When it comes to it, it'll come to understanding. Both to me and Volg.

"I'll work hard so I can make that day come, a day quicker than before."

"I shall put my best effort so that day won't come as well. Losing makes me feel miserable, indeed."

I bump my fist with Volg.

I've gained a lot of things from interacting with this man. He is my mentor as well as my rival.

"By the way, Faruno is scheduled to arrive today, isn't she?"

"Finally she is. Today I'm welcoming the young lady. I'm able to do my main occupation

at last. I've been doing so much carpenter work that I'm starting to forget I'm a butler."

Finally, the mansion is completed and Faruno is coming. Oh, well, even though there seems to be one problem or the other brewing, I'd say I'm looking forward to it.

"I can only leave my young lady to someone stronger than me; I said that as a joke, but it was no longer a joke now."

"I'm only betrothed to her. I don't know how it'll turn out later on."

I smile bitterly while saying so.

My promise with Faruno states that if she can make me come around to her in a year, we'll be married. If not, the engagement will be dissolved. No one knows what will happen from now on.



Receiving carriages with the Fernandes crest in my village has become a daily occurrence. They usually contain materials for the mansion, or daily necessities for the carpenters. However, now that the building is completed, the carpenters have all returned home, leaving Faruno and her attendants, the frequency should drop sharply.

Tina and I were preparing to go out and welcome Faruno. The other party is her, but proper preparation is still necessary.

According to the schedule, she should have arrived about this time...

And so, it arrived.

The carriage carved with Marquis Fernandes' crest appears from the highway, halts in front of our house as its door is vigorously opened. Faruno shows up from inside.

"I'm finally able to come here. I've been wishing to see you, Kurt-sama!"

Faruno jumps out vigorously. I'm the one who receives her.

"That's, how to say, it's improper, Faruno."

Let's rebuke her this time. She's not yet a girl sent off to her new family after being

married.

“Even if you say so, I cannot help it, because we’ve always been separated in our ways.”

Faruno removes herself from me while puffing her cheeks.

“...That’s, how to say it? I’ll be under your care from now on.”

I offer my right hand out. Faruno instantly grabs it with her own.

“Likewise, I will be under your care, Kurt-sama!”

So she said.



We’re touring around the village with Faruno, in order to let her know what kind of life she’ll be living here. If she doesn’t know about our lowest living standard, it’ll be harsh for her.

Going around the village while talking back and forth, Faruno looks engrossed in her conversation with me. After a round of chatter, I cut the chase to the important part.

“To tell you the truth, I’ve prepared to make some sweets for your sake, Faruno.”

I think that only some pastries will be proper to welcome her, so I’ve prepared special sweets.

“It’s the best news! Let’s head over to Kurt-sama’s house immediately!”

“We can do that, but I have a single request. If you allow it, the sweets won’t be just to celebrate your presence, Faruno, but also all of the new comrades in my village. I wish to entertain all the children in your mansion. Is it okay? My house is too small, after all.”

Girls like to be special. More than making new comrades happy, she’ll want to celebrate herself. Still, I daringly made that request. If it’s Faruno, who expressed her concern for those children, surely... Right?

“Oh, my... Isn’t it all the better? Good food tastes better when being shared with

everyone! Moreover, I've been thinking about those children too. It'll be wonderful if I can start talking with them while eating your pastry!"

"Thank you. Then, I'll make it with the best of my ability. You've all come to be a part of my village. For Faruno's and all those children's sake, this pastry will celebrate our new future."

The main ingredient this time is raspberry. Right when the season changed, I got those red fruits. I got those children to harvest them. If they can eat what they raise on their own from now on, it will surely add to their spirit.

Let's make the pastry with the best of my ability.

Chapter 16

Raspberry Tart of Blessings and Bonds

I decided to bake a raspberry tart in order to celebrate and welcome Faruno and the children.

It's just the right time for raspberry harvest. Yesterday, I got the children to pick them. Most of them are preserved in honey, the rest of them are split into today's use and distributed supply for the villagers.

As a preservation method, honey preservation is certainly superior. With a strong sterilization effect, fruits can be preserved in honey for more than a year.

In other words, even in winter when no fruit can be harvested, we can still enjoy the juicy raspberry's flavor. Moreover, there's a different delicacy compared to the fruit when eaten fresh.

"I should sample the taste."

I bite into raspberries that I've cut into small pieces. Refreshing sourness rushes about in my mouth. Then there's a faintly sweet taste. There's not enough sweetness when they're eaten fresh, but after being tossed and heated, the sweetness should be just about right.

I fetch the tart crust dough that I made yesterday from the shelf. The tart dough was kneaded by adding eggs and walnut oil to wheat flour. I press the dough, shaping it into a circular shape, not forgetting to make the thinness uniform. Then, I puncture the dough, make the rim of the crust, remove the air by adding stone weight, and complete the pre-cooking stage.



After the crust is done, it's now the cream's turn to be made. This time, I use pistachio foraged from the mountain to add to the tart cream. Pistachio is a wonderful nut which contains a lot of oil. After going through some preparation, mix the pistachio that has been ground into paste with newly made fresh cream. Then, don't forget to add honey

and egg yolk gradually here.

The fresh cream has been dyed with a beautiful emerald hue, signaling that the pistachio cream is done.

With this pistachio cream, I'll be able to build up the sweetness that the raspberry lacks, while smoothing the sour edge as well.

I sample the taste. "Yeah, tastes good."

I spread the pistachio cream on top of the finished tart's crust evenly. The umami of pistachio will only grow after being heated.

"It's the baking's turn next."

I put the tart crust that has been filled with pistachio cream into the oven. Due to the heating, the alluring smell of the pistachio wafts across the kitchen.



The tart is only baked for a short while. The shape is good, the surface of pistachio cream is also smooth. Afterwards, it needs to be cooled down for a moment.

In the mean time, I make custard cream from egg yolk, honey, and fresh cream. This tastes better without going through the fire. After the tart is cooled, I spread the custard cream on top of the tart's surface. I'm sure this will add a nice accent to the pistachio cream.

I sprinkle chopped pistachio to add more accent to the texture. Then, it's the main actor's showtime. I cover all the custard cream generously with raspberries. Juicy and vibrant red fruits are as dazzling as precious rubies.



“With this, it’s completed.”

Faruno and the kids will surely be overjoyed.



I take advantage of Faruno’s favor by borrowing a room in Faruno’s mansion to hold a welcome party for Faruno and the children. When I arrive in front of the room, I can already hear their chattering voices.

“Kurt-aniki is a slave driver to his workers!”

Johann exaggerates mundane things to Faruno. He’s complaining with a bright tone, though, making it sound like he enjoyed it.

“But Kurt-sama is so kind. He teaches us politely.”

“Besides, if you work earnestly, you can finish up properly.”

The other children playfully refute him.

“Oi, you’re spoiling it.”

As Johann says with a chuckle, Faruno smiles bitterly.

“Are you happy that you came to this village?”

Upon Faruno’s question, the children look at each other.

“Un.” They nod in unison.

“As I thought, it feels good to do a decent job. We don’t feel guilty or get beaten up over it... besides, we can eat a lot here.”

“Yeah, after a lot of work, the food will surely be there too. This is the ultimate happiness.”

The children get highly excited.

They work earnestly without pretense. Tina is training them; they absorb everything so quickly that they have remembered almost everything in just a week. And if a single one of them remembers, he/she will properly explain to the company, lessening Tina’s burden significantly. Recruiting them into this village has been a huge boon.

Feeling the joyful atmosphere from this room, a smile naturally comes to my face too. Then I enter the room.



“Everyone, I’ve brought the pastry to the celebration party.”

The moment I entered the room, the children let out high pitched noises.

“*Uwaa*, it smells so good!”

“So pretty!”

“Those are the raspberries that we picked yesterday, right?”

“I took a tiny bite, but it just tasted sour.”

There are intriguing comments, but in general, the response is positive.

“Everyone, Kurt-sama’s pastries are so wonderful that even nobles will give them high praises. I couldn’t even count how many nobles said that they wanted to eat another one, but they couldn’t. Being able to eat such a pastry is truly a blessing.”

When Faruno says so, the children’s expectations turn higher.

“The pastry that nobles can’t even eat!!”

“Awesomeeee.”

“I’m glad we came to this village~”

The children lean forward impatiently, they can’t wait anymore. In that case, I should let them eat it soon, right?

“Tina, please prepare the plates.”

“Yes, Kurt-sama.”

With a gleeful look, Tina comes back with small plates. I take out the cake knife from my upper clothes, then I cut the tart. As the cake knife goes through the pie, it makes delicious crunching sounds.



The sweet smell from the raspberry, the savory smell from baked pistachio cream, and with all those fragrances wafting through the air, there’s that crisp sound.

With the barrage of sound and smell tempting them, the children start drooling.

“Tina, line up the sliced tart, please.”

“As you wish.”

Tina sets the sliced tart into the tray and places them. There are children who look like they can’t hold back to take the tart that’s lying right in front of them, but their hand is slapped by the child next to them.

All the portions of the tart are set in this way.

“Let’s get to the troublesome talk first. Everyone, I really thank you for coming to my village. Today, I made a pastry to convey my gratitude to all of you. And I want you to know how much you’re part of this wonderful creation, so I made this one. You helped in making it, from the honey and the raspberry. I want you to know just how wonderful that is.”

Short as it is, my speech is over. I think the children can’t stand to wait any longer.

“Let’s give our prayer. There are probably some of you who don’t know it yet, so I’ll say it first. After repeating the prayer that I’m about to say, you should eat right away.”

I clap once.

“For the food that we have today, we thank the forest and god.”

“””For the food that we have today, we thank the forest and god.”””

Everyone speaks in unison, then starts to eat the raspberry tart.



Inside the room, the sound of chomps resounds as teeth bite into the tart’s crust. What a pleasing sound. I can’t hold back either and start eating my portion.

The base crust gives a crunchy response as I chomp into it, then the smoothness of pistachio cream envelops the feel for the longest time, while the custard cream gives a fluffy feeling to it.

When I chew, the chopped nuts reveal themselves, the raspberry juice spreads in the mouth, the sweet and rich cream blends together with the sour raspberry. A fascinating world that can’t be achieved by a single one of them now harmoniously spreads in my mouth.

It’s a great flavor. I did a good job.

When I look next to me, Tina’s tail is shaking in a buzz. Tina seems to be lost in putting the remaining tart into her mouth.

I can say the same for the children. They've forgotten how to talk as their teeth keep sinking into the tart. Obviously, eating that way will make the tart finish up in a second... And the next second, the children who were enraptured with the deliciousness recover themselves...

"Aah, I've eaten it all!"

"It's, it's gone!"

"This pastry, for the first time in my life..."

"Uuuu, I still want to eat it~"

They cry words of regret one after another. There are children who lick their plates in a bad manner, flick their finger to steal the cream from the corner of the lips of the child next to them.

"Kurt-sama's pastry is as wonderful as always. Even in Marquis Fernandes' territory, no one can eat pastries as good as this."

Faruno, the only one who eats with a knife and fork instead of bare hands, gives me praise.

"Praising me to that extent truly makes me glad."

"I've confirmed it from eating this pastry. Kurt-sama's pastries are profound. The delicious taste is layered one upon another while attaining a sense of harmony. It's different to any other cook in the world."

Faruno's unintentional words describes the fundamental principle of pastries in the modern world. On top of multiple layers of delicious flavor, it needs to achieve balance as well. That exact sense is what showcases a pâtissier's skill.

"Receiving that kind of praise means that I have to make even more wonderful pastries, don't I?"

Since I've built those expectations, it makes me wish to answer those feelings.

"Kurt-aniki, are there any seconds?"

“Ou, I want to eat it too.”

“Me too, me too!”

The food doesn't seem to be enough for growing children. It's a good thing that I've put it into consideration.

“To be honest with you, I've indeed prepared something.”

Opening the door and carrying over the tart from the kitchen, Volg appears.

“My apologies for the wait. Young lady, Kurt-sama, everyone.”

Everyone stands up lively, not expecting a second batch at all.

“If you want seconds, raise your hand.”

The children, as well as Tina with her ears pointing straight up, raise their hands. Then...

“Me as well, I wish for another slice as well.”

While looking extremely embarrassed, Faruno also raises her hand timidly.

It looks so strange that everyone laughs.

Chapter 17

A Strange Visitor

It's been three months since Faruno arrived; the season has changed into autumn. The bee production increase is doing extremely well, with new hive boxes containing new queen bees and increasing the number of new bees in turn.

The winter brings cold and food shortage, rendering the bees useless. The amount of money won't be able to compare to what we can harvest now.

The raspberry garden also continues to expand thanks to the children's hard work. Other than that, when the raspberry flowers don't blossom, we also introduced blueberries for the bees' food.

The chickens also continue to increase. It's about time for the chicks to start laying eggs. In spring, we can start enjoying genuine eggs. I was worried about whether the plan to make delicious pastries a local specialty sold from this village could get on time or not, actually.

I'm writing in an account book in my room. I'm having more fun than usual. Because, it's the first time since I came to this village that the account book shows a positive balance. My heart is soaring.

"Tina, you made a mistake there."

"Uu, it's so difficult, Kurt-sama."

This time, I'm not plainly writing the account book alone, I'm also teaching Tina how to do it. I've taught her how to write and count, but this time, I'm teaching her how to make an accounting record. If Tina can do that, I'll be overjoyed. If possible, I wish to leave the paperwork to someone else while finding new inventions as my task.

"Kurt-sama, I'll be intruding."

Faruno appears then. At first, she showed strange excitement when entering my house, but now she has come to the stage where she can let herself in on her own.

She's not wearing a dress, but something more practical to use, even if it's still well tailored. She has also gotten used to this village.

Her main task is to examine the advanced agricultural techniques from this village, then relay that information to Margrave Fernande. For that sake, she doesn't hold back from mingling with the villagers and doing their job as well. Of course, it'll be wrong to say that she's the only one who reaps the benefit. I also request something from her in equal value as compensation. It's about time to get my reply from Faruno.

"Aah, you're here. Faruno. Hold on, I'm a busy right now, so could you wait for a moment?"

"Yes, I don't mind. You're doing the accounting, right?... I can be your strength in this area, I think. Will you let me take a look for a moment, please?"

Faruno moves her pen as fast as a breeze. Reading over the materials on the side, she's writing down the accounting records. From what I can see, she's actually quite punctual.

"Hee, so Faruno can do this kind of thing too."

"In Margrave Fernande's territory, I'm involved in the administration. I can do it to this degree."

She sounds reliable. The digit of the scale of the Fernande's territory can't be compared to my humble village. The complexity of the accounting in that territory must have increased accordingly. I have no comment about her capabilities.

"If it pleases you, I can help with this job. Kurt-sama shouldn't worry about the finances, please start new breakthroughs at your own pace. I think it will be more suitable to be handled that way."

"There's no need to do that. I will do it!" Tina snaps at Faruno.

"Tina-san, you are smart, I'm sure you can do this too. However, you have your serving tasks and you're the beekeeping manager as well, aren't you? You can't be in so many places at once to do this task too. Kurt-sama and Tina-san, I think it's better if you can split the responsibilities to others as well."

Indeed, it's just as Faruno said. I've been taking Tina's dependable help as a given,

impossibly so. Even now, it must have been too much for her. I have to reflect on this.

“Faruno, can I leave it to you?”

“Yes, absolutely.”

I’m aware that I shouldn’t let an outsider know about the contents of my wallet, but she’s a person above the clouds in the first place. Knowing or not knowing so, if she has malicious intent, it’ll all be over. Besides, I believe in Faruno as a human being.

“In any case, Faruno, about the thing that I asked you, could it be done?”

“Yes, we have received huge help from Kurt-sama until now, then there’s also the hassle you suffered back then, father gladly consented to your request.”

“I’m glad, then.”

I grin. It’s a huge step in achieving my dream.

“Kurt-sama, what did you ask for, exactly?” Tina’s question comes.

“What I’m asking for, is something irreplaceable to start selling pastries. Since Margrave Fernande’ apology letter came, I took that chance to ask for a store in the commercial city Eclaba as well as preparing a channel to sell them outside Margrave Fernande’ territory. I also asked him not to put taxes on my pastries. No matter which one I asked, it is not something that can be bought with money.”

“I see... That’s amazing.”

When spring comes, the honey harvesting production will jump up. Then, I’ve also obtained a stable supply of eggs. The wheat has also surpassed the amount needed in daily meals in the village. In other words, everything has been provided in this territory and I only need to start selling. So I want to sell and start making money.

However, to start selling, the hurdle is extremely high, not only for me personally, for one whole territory. And I’m able to pass that high hurdle thanks to Margrave Fernande. For that sake, I don’t mind even if I have to expose the abilities that I possess.

“Just as Tina-san said, it’s amazing. However, Tina-san, please do not misunderstand.

This isn't Margrave Fernande's charity. It's a fair value for the work that Kurt-sama has been doing until now. Kurt-sama who can put forth that value is the amazing one. Even Father said that he could finally regain the balance while smiling."

Hearing her words, Tina's eyes dazzlingly sparkle with respect.

In any case, finally I've reached the point where I can start making the village prosperous with a single step left.



"Kurt-aniki!"

A boy shows up after banging the door open. It's Johann, who was once the leader of street children in the town. He's idolized by the other kids, and has been doing great in bringing them up together.

"What's the matter, Johann?"

"It's terrible. That, in our raspberry garden, there's a collapsed woman!"

"That's terrible. Lead the way."

Following Johann, I set out from the place.



With Johann guiding, we arrive at the raspberry garden where the children are crowding over. There's a girl lying on the ground at the center.

"Uuuu, uuu..." With a pale blue face, she's been groaning.

"Don't tell me, an elf?"

It's a beautiful female with golden hair. Her ears are longer than a human's. Her clothes don't seem to originate from this region either. I've known that elves exist, but it's the first time I see one.

"Are you all right?"

I'm asking her, but there's no response. I examine her condition. She's conscious, there's no mistake. Normally, she'll wake up anytime, but...

"I'm so hungry I can't moveee..."

While thinking about my suspicions, the person in question let me know why she can't move in the most straightforward way.

When we hear that we gawk, feeling strength leaving our bodies.

Chapter 18

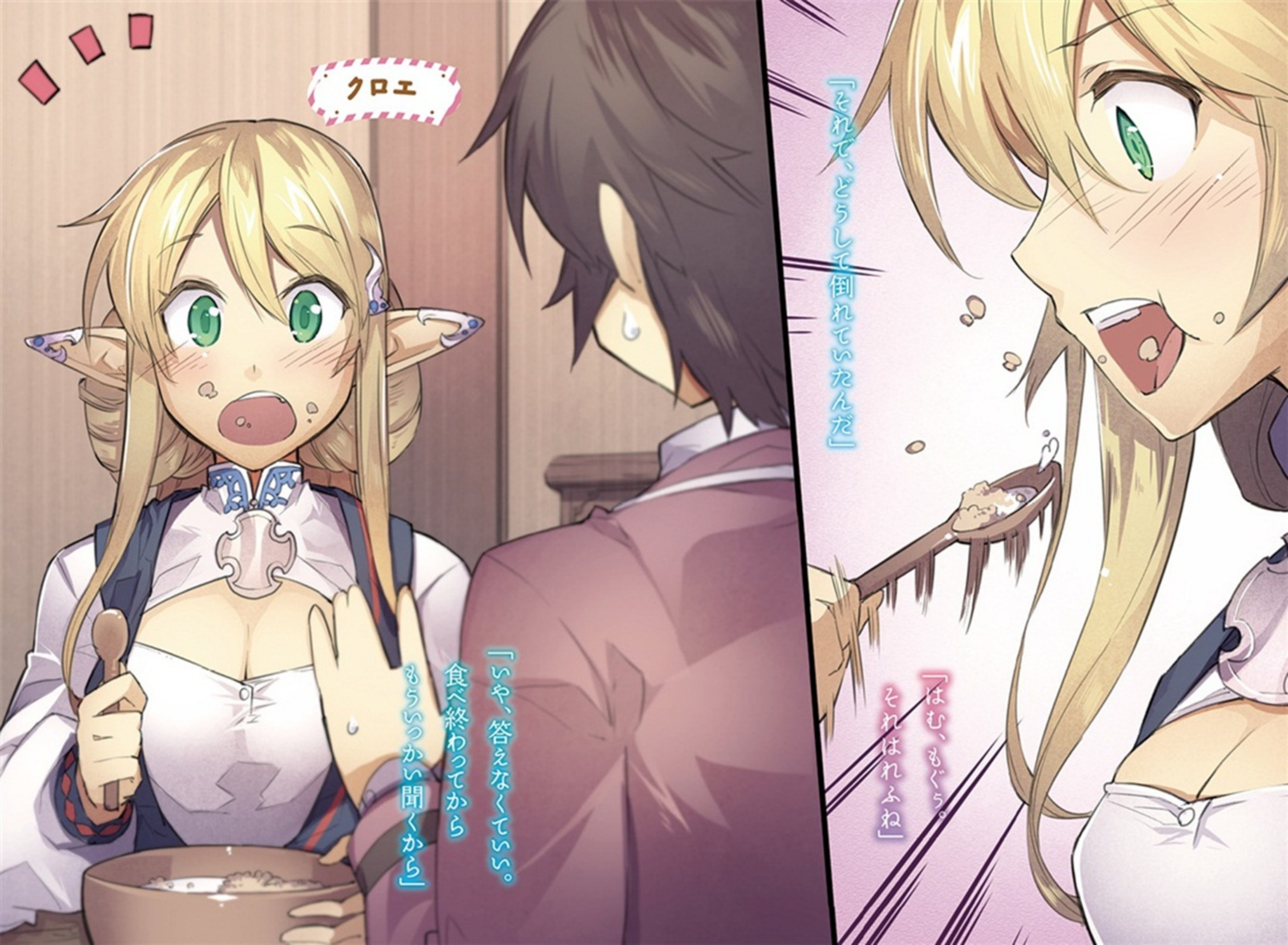
The Resolution to Set Off

“Munch, huff huff, gulp gulp.”

The elf girl, who had been lying down until earlier, is now currently vigorously eating the milk porridge with bread that Tina brought for her.

The milk porridge is made from adding honey to warm goat milk. There are pieces of bread put in there. It's a dish that is sweet and full of nutrition, perfect for most sick people.

The children are looking at her with envious gazes. Both my examination and her own statement indicate that she collapsed without being able to move due to an empty stomach.



クロエ

「いや、答えなくていい。
食べ終わってから
もういっかい聞くから」

「それで、どうして倒れていたんだ」

「はむ、もぐら。
それはれふね」

“Then, how did you collapse?”

“Munch, gulp. The reafhon wafh,”

“Stop there, it’s okay not to answer. I’ll listen to you once you’ve finished eating.”

I have so many things to ask, but I decided to wait until the elf girl is done eating.



“Huuuff, that was delicious. You brought me back to life.”

With the corner of her lips white from the milk, she murmurs in satisfaction. She’s a beautiful type with golden hair and blue eyes, but something about her gives a messy impression. She’s so energetic that I can’t connect her to the person who collapsed not too long ago. I should be able to ask her without worrying though.

“I’ll ask you again. Tell me, how did you collapse?”

When I ask, the elf girl makes a small pondering gesture before opening her mouth.

“I, set off on a journey, to a human kingdom, from the spirit village. But, no matter where I went, I couldn’t find any humans. I ate all my rations, I failed to hunt, then I collapsed because my stomach was empty. Generous man, thank you for the meal. You saved my life.”

The elf girl speaks apologetically.

“Well, don’t mind it. Why did you come to a human kingdom in the first place?”

Elves are an exclusive race; they live self-sufficiently without mingling with other villages, living by themselves in the village and forest where they are born until their death, or so I heard. That’s why, even though people have heard about their existences, those who have seen them personally are exceedingly rare.

“Right now, the spirit village is in a bad situation... a plague has spread, everyone collapsed. Me, who was still healthy, went out to buy medicine. Elven medicine didn’t work. But, I think human medicine might.”

I see, it fits my previous knowledge if she set off from the spirit village in order to save

them. The medical development in human towns will be superior to a secluded village.

“But, I’m glad that I’ve arrived in a human kingdom in this way. At a glance, you seem to be a doctor. Can you cure everyone’s illness?”

The elf girl stares at me earnestly. What to do? She seems to have concluded that I’m the doctor here from my medical examination and the reaction of the people surrounding us.

“I haven’t heard about the patient’s condition, but regarding diseases, there are those that can be healed and cannot be healed. The result and the necessary medicine are also different. There are diseases that can’t even be healed by medicines in the first place. If possible, I’d like to hear the full story.”

I have a bad feeling about this. This elf is more ignorant than I thought. She wasn’t even aware how important it was to be specific about the disease. She spoke as if a good medicine would work effectively on any disease.

“Uh, there are violent coughs, then collapsing, then the fever goes really high. No appetite. In weak ones, they die after a month. Really terrible illness!”

The elf girl tries to describe the disease as best as she can.

“It’s no good. It’s too vague. I don’t have knowledge of it... and most likely, the others are the same. I can make you medicine to stop the fever, though. But I can’t declare that it will save everyone more than that. I’ve told you this earlier, but there are medicines that will cure the symptoms, but there are also a lot of diseases that cannot be healed by medicines.”

“It can’t be... Then, why did I go for. At this rate, the spirit village,”

A plague that makes an elf’s village perishes. If it happens in a human town, it will become a huge topic. I never heard anything like that happening recently, either in the Arnold fief or in Margrave Fernande’s territory. Most likely, it’s an unknown disease.

“If it’s Kurt-aniki, aren’t you able to cure them? See, you saved Mille, don’t you have that miraculous black medicine!?”

Johann cuts in from the sideline.

Indeed, in order to hide my power of Recovery, I made up something about a black medicine that could heal anything.

“Such a thing!? Please! I beg you, share that medicine! I, not only me, but all of the elves will give you anything in return, as long as we have them. Elves are bound by their vows, we will never lie. Trust me!”

When she heard Johann’s words, the elf girl deeply lowers her head.

I lost the chance to tell her that I cannot do that.

I’m hesitating.

I can cure the elves.

Should I let them die to protect the secret of Recovery? Is it really good to cast despair on this desperate girl? However, I don’t know if I can protect my secret if I do something as showy as curing an entire village. My Recovery is so dangerous that I have to be prepared for an instant destruction once someone else finds out about it. Its utility value is too high.

“I beg you!”

The elf girl pleads again.

When I’m still pressed for words without actually being able to answer, the elf girl raises her head to see my response. Then her eyes go open wide. Within her sight, there’s Tina.

“Culrina-*anesama*?”

The girl calls Tina with a name that I didn’t recognize.

“Culrina-*anesama*, why are you in this kind of place? Please, I beg Culrina-*anesama* as well. The village, the village will disappear, everyone will die.”

The elf girl grabs Tina’s shoulders then makes a desperate urging.

Tina is in dismay.

That's not a reaction for an unknown Culrina to her.

"Tina, do you know this Culrina person?"

When I ask her, Tina nods, then slowly opens her mouth.

"It's, my mother's name."

That one sentence is enough to surprise every single person here.

Chapter 19

To Spirit Village

The blonde, blue-eyed elf girl called Tina as Culrina-anesama.

It seems that it's Tina's mother's name.

"That is this girl's mother's name. Did you know Culrina-san?" I ask the elf girl.

I want to find out, no matter what. There's a possibility that Tina's birth mother is in the spirit village.

"Yes, I received her kindness many times. She's a person who is just like my sister. But, I didn't know that she had a daughter..."

The elf girl stares at Tina without blinking. Then, she shows an expression as if she has realized something.

"By the way, I haven't introduced myself, have I? I'm Chloe from the spirit village. I'm an elf."

Her line of sight is directed at me... and Tina.

"I'm Kurt. I'm the head of this village."

"I'm Tina. I'm Kurt-sama's servant."

After hearing our introduction, the elf girl, Chloe, murmurs Tina's name in small voice, chewing her lips.

"Hey, Tina. Is Culrina-anesama well? Since leaving thirteen years ago, we haven't been in touch. I am worried."

Hearing that question, Tina's face turns saddened in an instant, then she opens her mouth.

“Mother died four years ago. It was from a plague disease.”

Chloe went speechless. It was from two things: the death of someone dear to her, and that her cause of death has occurred in the village as well.

They should be different diseases. Still, there are some points to think about.

“...So that’s it? Culrina-anesama is a liar. Even though she went out from the village saying that she would definitely be happy. Even though that’s the reason why I didn’t stop her.”

Tears flow from Chloe’s eyes.

When I see it, the wariness that I have against her slightly dissipates. There’s no way that someone who’ll cry for Tina’s mother is a bad person.

“Tina, did you know about the spirit village?”

“Only as much as what my mother told me, I’ve never gone there before. But when she talked about the spirit village, she always looked happy. It’s a bountiful village, with lots of fruits grown, everyone is always smiling, and they never get hungry.”

“Is that so? Then why would she run from the village?”

From Tina’s story, in order to be with Tina’s father who was a human, Tina’s mother felt that it was better to leave the spirit village who banned mingling with humans behind. For Tina’s mother, stepping into the outside world for the first time must have been filled with many harsh trials.

Chloe the elf grimaces.

“Culrina-anesama is stupid. If she didn’t leave, she could still live happily in the village even now. The outside only brought sorrow to her.”

Tina shakes her head when she hears Chloe’s words.

“Please take those words back. Mother’s time in the village was filled with happiness, and she went through a lot of hardship after she left, but she said that she was happier because she had me and Father. Even on her deathbed, she said so.”

Tina's eyes pierce straight into Chloe's.

"Is that so. Sorry. Tina. So that's what happened."

As if being reassured, Chloe manages to wring out the words even while wearing a weirdly suffering look.

The atmosphere has turned strange, but I must continue the conversation.

"Chloe, it's regretful, but... In this village, there's no medicine that could save the spirit village."

"I, I see. Nothing can be that good, huh."

Chloe seems to have half-resigned, she bites her lips while receiving my reply.

"About the thing you should do from now on, there are two choices. The first one is to return to the spirit village. The other one is to take a horse carriage from here and run it for about a day to reach a town much bigger than this village."

Chloe's face lights up gradually.

Perhaps, she thought that there could be something that could help herself in bigger town.

"I cannot recommend you to go into a human's town, though. Most likely, that fragmented information about the disease epidemic won't let you find a doctor who can prescribe any suitable medicine, even in such a big town... Also, for the time being, you are too ignorant and naive, Chloe. If you arrive there, you'll be tricked by someone and become mere food. Most humans aren't kind, you see."

An ignorant and naive elf girl, showing her weak self while moving around in such a big town, is called being suicidal.

"That's, how, I see, no good. Can't do anything."

Indeed, there's nothing that she can do. However, I probably could save them.

"Tina, there's one thing I'd like to ask. How do you feel about the village where your mother was born? Do you detest the village who chased your mother out due to their

rules?”

If Tina’s mother was forgiven by the village, she would probably be alive even now. It’s not strange if Tina detests it.

“No, I don’t feel that way at all. Even after leaving the village, Mother still loved it... That’s why, I don’t wish for a place that my mother loves to disappear.”

I see. Then that decides what I must do.

“Chloe, after listening to your story, it’s probably futile, but there’s a chance that I can save them if I examine the patients firsthand.”

“Are you saying the truth!?”

“Only that there’s a chance. There’s also a chance that I’ll judge nothing can be done after doing the examination. But still, nothing will change if I don’t start anything. If you wish to bet your chances on me, I’ll go to the spirit village.”

As the only doctor in this village, I have legit knowledge and practice in the medical field. Moreover, in the most unlikely event that I judge the medical science can’t do anything about it, I have my [Recovery^{Heal}]. If it’s possible, I wish to stay away from using [Recovery^{Heal}] at all. I’m praying that the medical science can settle the issue.

“Even so, thank you! It’s no good to make this choice. But, no good doesn’t mean absolutely impossible.”

She grasps both of my hands, conveying how much she’s thankful.

Faruno, who has been silent from the start, finally asks me, “Going to the spirit village, is it for Tina-san’s sake? There will be problems if the single person responsible for the whole territory becomes absent to handle a personal matter for a long time. Moreover, there is a possibility that you will be infected. If you die, how will this fief turn out? I don’t believe that you are so careless that you have not thought about that possibility. As the head, can’t you see how reckless this decision is?”

Faruno’s words are severe, but they are highly justified.

“There will definitely be a profit, you see. I am intrigued by the fruits grown by the

elves. The works of beings who works with plants, even I have heard stories about how heavenly they taste. If I can procure a stable supply, it will become a strong asset of mine. Assets for pastry development for Arnold is very important. For that sake, there's a value in betting my life. Moreover, I didn't say about this reason, but [there's no way that Tina and I will get infected, we won't ever become carriers for the illness either]."

When I say so, Faruno giggles.

"So you're thinking about pastries even in this sort of situation. How very like you. Also, about your secret. I'm very intrigued by it, but I will leave it to hearing about it someday."

Those are half-cooked reasons, but I'm not lying.

If it's for baking delicious pastries, I'll definitely be able to do it.

"Everyone, I've decided to go to save the spirit village. I wish for Tina to go with me as my aide."

Tina strongly nods at my order, while Faruno puffs her cheeks.

"I'm going as well."

"You can't, because it's a village where there's a high possibility of contracting the epidemic. If I let Faruno be exposed to that, it won't be over by receiving a punishment on my own. Like I said before, there's no worry about that happening to Tina and I, but it's not the case with Faruno. I can't bring you."

If Faruno contracts the disease, there's a possibility that I can cure it by using ^{Heal} Recovery . However, if I bring her to that kind of place, there's no way this point won't be reported to her father, making it terribly dangerous.

"But if Kurt-sama has the solution for the disease, it'll be all right."

"And I'm saying that I don't know if I can do that... My bad, but please take care of this place. I feel reassured if I can leave this place to you, Faruno."

"I understand. May fortune be with you."

After reaching that point, Faruno finally gives a nod.

“Johann, while Tina and I are absent, all of the beekeeping and raspberry gardening works will be your responsibility. Are you up to the task?”

From the children surrounding us, Johann takes a step forward. With Johann in charge, the children will work well altogether.

“Ou, leave it to me, Kurt-aniki!”

“I’m leaving it to you. Then, Faruno. Let Salt know that I’m absent. If you do so, he’ll be able to handle his job well.”

“Yes, I understand.”

Salt has become indispensable as a big man who leads the workers. With this, they can make it somehow without me around.

All that’s left is to set off to the elven village.

“Chloe, you’re in charge of guiding us to the spirit village. Tina and I will go home once to arrange the journey preparation and we’ll depart immediately. If you’re worried about your physical condition, you may take an overnight rest first, how about it?”

“I’m good! I can go soon! Elves’ body is tough!”

What a spirited thing to say after collapsing not too long ago. I should no longer have any worry to address about her.

And so, Tina and I decided to depart to the spirit village.

Chapter 20

Pinal Fruit

Since we've decided to head to the spirit village, Tina and I went back to the house once, arranged the clothes to pack fast, and went to set off from the pioneering village right away.

Serving as the pathfinder, Chloe the blonde-haired blue-eyed elf is guiding us. We don't use horse carriages. The spirit village seems to be further away deeper into the forest that we're currently reclaiming, there's no open path leading us there.

Both Tina and I can strengthen our physical abilities with mana, so it's faster to run.

"Slow down a bit? Kurt and Tina can both follow me?"

Running ahead, Chloe's question comes for us.

"I'm fine. Tina, you're fine too, right?"

"Yes, I can take it easy since I'm right behind Kurt-sama."

Tina responds cheerfully. She has been perfectly sticking to my back since earlier.

If we increase the speed, the air resistance will also intensify. For example, countering the air resistance in 40 kmh speed will consume half of existing kinetic energy. Tina uses me as a windbreaker and suppresses her physical strength consumption.

"How about you, Chloe? Honestly, you collapsed not too long ago, I'm still worried."

"Worried, thank you. But, I'm okay. Milk porridge that Tina made was delicious, and being in the forest makes elves healthy."

I bitterly smile. I can see that already by how powerful her legs look like.

All of the elves possess mana, almost without exception, plus, they seem to have grown accustomed with it. Really, their mana utilization is superior, of course her energy

consumption is minimum with that.

The three of us run past the forest.

Albeit not better than the elf, Tina and I have become familiar with the forest. Getting tired isn't an issue at all. If I actually brought Faruno, our speed would be largely crippled.

After running for a while, Chloe reaches her knapsack and takes out a round fruit of a pale red color.

"Tiring, right? Plenty rehydrate with nutrition. If you eat this, your tiredness will fly away."

I receive the fruit and pass it to Tina. As I do so, Chloe takes out another one.

Chloe bites into the delicious looking fruit. No matter how I look at it, the fruit with that sweet scent can only be peach.

"I sincerely thank you. You actually brought more food, so how could you collapse like that before?"

"This, I brought to exchange with the medicine. What can make humans happy from the spirit village, I can only think about this pinal (ピナル) fruit. I thought about eating them so many times, but I didn't. The part that I eat, will take away more medicine from my people, I'm scared."

Chloe shows a complicated smile.

So there's that kind of issue. This girl has a screw loose, but she's definitely a good girl.

I sink my teeth into this pinal fruit that I can't differentiate from peach. It really gives off the scent so sweet that I'm at my limit.

Inside my mouth, sweet and sour flavors start to spread.

The biting sensation feels so pleasant. The plumpness that bounces back at my teeth... when I break it, the fruit juice splashes and fills my mouth. The flavor of pinal fruit pervades my tired body.

What a nostalgic taste. It's very similar to the breed of peach that I grew in my house of my previous life, the Hakuho breed that's called to be the most superior among all the peaches.

The flesh is delicate, while there are more than plenty juice. Strongly sweet and mildly sour. The juice is dripping, gushing forth the moment you eat it. With this, I could probably make a specialty pastry. In my previous world, the pastry that crowned me a winner in so many concours that I participated in was a western pastry made from the fruit from my hometown mountain.

If I have this pinal fruit, I can make it again.

"How? Delicious?"

Chloe turns around with unconcealed pride.

"It's the best fruit. I've never tasted a fruit this delicious in this world."

I want to talk back a little to her, but after eating a fruit this wonderful, I can only earnestly give my full approval.

Turning around, I see that Tina also has the fruit juice dripping from the corner of her mouth, but she's not discouraged from licking them. It seems that she utterly likes it.

Tina notices that I'm watching, then her face turns red while she hides her hand behind her back. If she's that pleased with the raw ingredient, there's no need for a pastry chef, is there? Inside my heart, I swear to make a pastry with this pinal fruit that will definitely be more delicious than the raw ingredient next time.

"This pinal, I grew it." Chloe stands elatedly.

I've heard the stories about how good the fruits grown by the elves were, but I didn't think it would be this much.

At any rate, fruits from Earth are works of art that become gradually more delicious after accumulating selective breeding for decades. The fruits in this world lack something. And yet, the pinal fruit that Chloe gave to us can rival the fruits back on Earth. For the sake of obtaining this fruit, I will do anything.

"So it's made by Chloe. It's amazing. Is there any other fruit?"

“Un, there are. We pick a lot of paples (パプル), I think.”

“What kind of fruit is that?”

“Uhm, let’s see, a lot of small fruits wrapped in purple skin. You can see green flesh if you peel the skin.”

From that description, it has to be grapes. Peaches, and grapes. For me, the resident of Yamanashi prefecture in my previous life, both of them can be said to be my soul food. My anticipation is rising up.

“Chloe, if I can settle the epidemic, will you be able to gather a tenth of one year’s worth of fruits in the spirit village?”

Just in case, I blow the condition out of proportion, under the assumption that the condition will be rejected. It’s better to obtain a continuous supply, if possible. Even a tenth of the harvest is an overcharge, though, as expected.

“Un, I can. It’s good that way! The head will give the final decision, but it’s not a problem at all!”

“...Hold on a second. I think you just blurted out something ridiculous.”

“You think so? The spirit village always has too many to eat, so about 3 out of 10 will be turned into fertilizer. If it’s just a tenth, no problem. You’re helping us, after all.”

Chloe talks indifferently.

Turning 30% of these incredible fruits into fertilizer!? How outrageous. I realized that I lost too. If I knew that, I’d haggle 30% worth out of them from the start.

While thinking so, we continue our journey to the spirit village.



We camp out because the sun has started to sink. From Chloe’s story, if we continue to travel early in the morning, we’ll reach the village by tomorrow evening. A two-day trip by using mana. I’m surprised by how close it is without ever realizing it before.

It should be caused by the undeveloped land. If we continue the reclamation for years,

maybe we'll notice it by ourselves.

I'm boiling water above the campfire. No matter how much we're used to it, the forest at night is still scary. Moreover, we've expended our mana and we can't rely on merely our stamina. We'll recover once we properly rest.

"Water magic arte, it's convenient."

"From my side, earth and fire magic artes are convenient too, though."

Tina made the campfire with her fire magic arte, while I used my earth magic arte to make an improvised stone pot, continued by Chloe using her water magic arte to fill it.

With magic artes of Fire • Earth • Water elements in our hands, there's generally nothing we can't do.

"Are there many Water attribute users among the elves?"

"We're split in half between Water and Wind. On the opposite, the lunars (ルナール) are mostly Fire, and sometimes Earth, I think?"

"Lunars?"

"In the spirit village, we call fox-eared folks by lunar. Like Tina."

In human villages, all people born with animal ears and tails are collectively called beastkin. It's the first time I meet with the lunar term.

"Are there any other folks beside elves and lunars?"

"Un, plenty. Bunnifas with rabbit ears, Cobals the dogs. The spirit village is a gathering of various races outside humans."

"Outside humans, huh..."

"Because humans take away the land and lives of other races. Can't live together. Yes, I'm telling you. Maybe there are more people now who hate humans because Culrina-anesama eloped with the collapsed human she nursed."

I perfectly grasp what she implies. Whether for good or bad reasons, humans are greedy. I'm also interested in the first half of her words.

"Tina's father has gone to the spirit village before?"

"Un, when I was small, Culrina-anesama picked up a human who collapsed in the forest. I remember because he told Culrina-anesama and me a lot of things about the outside. There were opinions that we couldn't let the news about the spirit village leak out so we should kill him, but Culrina-anesama defended him, allowing him to stay in the village under the condition that he wouldn't tell anything about the spirit village to anyone."

So that kind of thing happened. I wonder what kind of job Tina's father did back then. Tina's upbringing is good. I can tell from her vocabulary and gesture. If both parents weren't similar, they couldn't raise her this way.

"Don't tell me, I cannot get out of the spirit village once I step in?"

"Normally, yes. But, this is an emergency. I guarantee your safety."

I'm relieved, then. For a second there, I was concerned of getting the worst outcome.

"If there's anyone in danger, Tina is, more than Kurt."

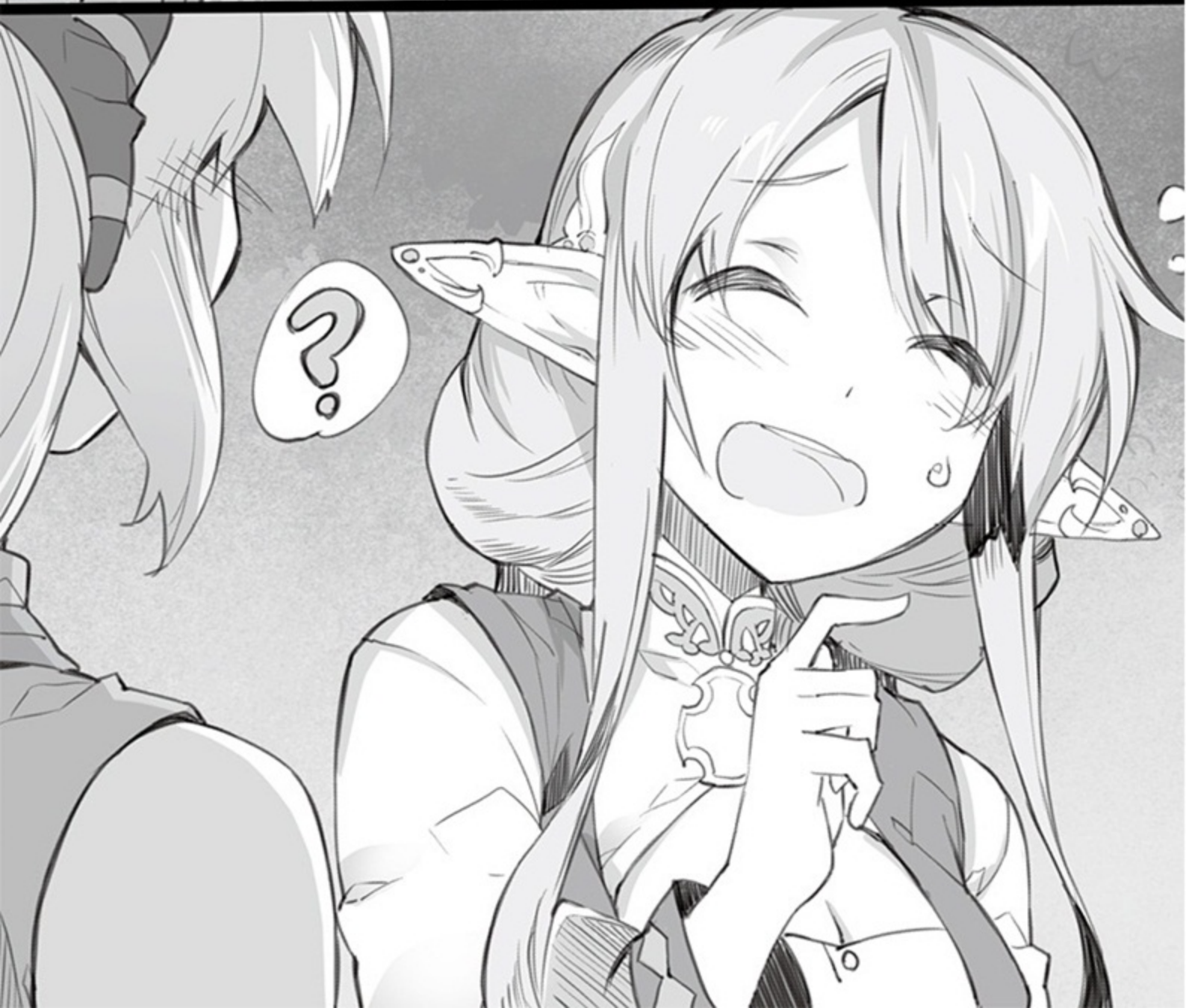
"Eh?"

Tina turns around from the campfire's direction.

"I'm in danger? Could it be because I'm a half human?"

"That is not the issue. Halves will only inherit the traits of one of the parents, so Tina is a full lunar. But, Tina is Culrina-anesama's daughter, so that person will..."

After going that far, Chloe stops.



“You have my full attention, so I wish you’ll continue the topic.”

“O-oh well, that’s, what happens, happens.”

Chloe becomes ambiguous.

I can imagine it, though. Most likely, it’s an issue from Tina’s blood family. There’s a possibility that they will detain Tina.

“Kurt-sama.”

Tina lifts her head to me, gripping the hem of her clothes.

“It’s all right.”

I rub her head, enjoying the soft feel of her hair and fox ears. When that time comes, I’ll leave it to them. If Tina chooses me, I will take her away no matter what, but if she chooses to be in the spirit village with her kin and blood relatives, I will send her there.

I love Tina, so separating from her is lonesome. However, I don’t have any intention to disregard her feelings. Besides, even if she chooses the spirit village, I can still see her around.

The night blankets down like that. Finally, we’ll reach the spirit village tomorrow. Meeting new fruits, the battle with the disease, Tina’s reunion with her blood relatives.

Each one of us with our expectations of the spirit village.

Chapter 21

Kudzu and The Meeting

We continued our journey early in the morning. We ate pinal fruit for breakfast. I feel energetic after eating one. We slip a lunchtime in, this time it is my turn to treat them with a handmade instant soup dissolved with water, with crackers boiled into it. Chloe is really into it.

Due to the war, there's a high demand tendency for preserved foods. I've been considering to make this a specialty product, along with pastries.

Then, true to Chloe's words, we reach our destination before evening.

"So this is the spirit village."

The spirit village is located in an open space very deep in the forest. It's encircled by wooden fences, and on the outer circle of lines of wooden houses, there are orchards thriving about. There's a unique outstanding clear stream canal, while around the canal, lush plants with large leaves grow in abundance. Those plants are hanging around the fences or wrapping around the trees, exuding a sweet smell and producing light pink flowers.

If I'm not mistaken... I pick the grass, overcome with faint anticipation.

"As I thought, it's kudzu. So even this kind of thing is grown here. Moreover, it's grown well. Without the cleanest water, it won't be able to turn out like this."

What a superb kudzu. Kudzu has a deep connection that can't be severed from pastries. It's famous as the ingredient for Japanese confectionery from time immemorial, but recently, the wondrous trait of this plant has been widely known and used in western pastries as well.

Agar and gelatin is separated by its "hardening" or "not hardening" use, but kudzu starch can delicately change its hardness according to the water portion added. It's a complete freedom to choose from springy texture similar to *mizu mochi* and *goma dofu* to soft and velvety jelly. On top of that, the taste won't become muddy at all.

Furthermore, when making cakes, it can be used as a substitute for wheat flour. If I use this, I can create an appealing mouthfeel texture.

“Un? That weed? It can clog up the water, so we trim them regularly. The flowers are pretty and it smells nice, but since it’s growing on its own, it’s a nuisance we’ve been troubled with.”

However, in contrast with my high spirit, Chloe the elf oddly tilts her head.

“Kudzu is a weed!?”

Kudzu is an extremely useful plant that can be used in food, as medicine, and for feeding the horses and goats. It’s to the extent that I want to bring it and grow it in Arnold fief.

...Ah, no, it should be impossible. To grow them, a large amount of pure water is needed. In the Arnold fief, it will only die.

“So human is changing. Wanting that kind of thing, you can just pick as much as you like and bring it home.”

“I thank you beforehand.”

I decide to bring them home as much as possible. With these superb kudzu, I’ll be able to get naturally great kudzu starch. Since they’ll be heavy, I should make the starch in this village before going home. Fresh kudzu is bulky after all, so I don’t have any other choice.

“Then, from here, I’ll bring you to Colt-ojisa... Cough, to the head. I’ll warn you that he’s a bit hard to please.”

With that, we enter the village while following Chloe.



“Chloe, so you’re safe and well!”

“You said that you were going to a human village, so we were really worried about you.”

When Chloe enters the village, the elves and beastkin call her out one after another. It seems that she's a popular one here.

"I'm sorry to make everyone worried. But, thanks to that, I've returned with a human doctor."

When she says that, many head turns at me. Being at the receiving end of such excessive attention, I feel uncomfortable.

"I came as the doctor, Kurt. I'll be troubling you for a short while."

Or so the greeting goes, but I feel the distance already. They don't really welcome humans, it seems. I've been warned though, so I don't feel discouraged.

"Everyone, don't make those faces. He's the human doctor that I brought back after much hardship. Please."

Even with Chloe's desperate plea to amend the situation, the reaction from the surrounding crowd doesn't change.

"But, Chloe, the one you brought here is a human."

"Elder told us not to have anything to do with humans."

"That's right. If we just wait a bit longer the village shaman can pray the sickness to go away..."

One by one, the residents of the spirit village voice their objections.

Seeing them, Chloe's voice turns thick with anger.

"What things are you saying!? We couldn't do anything by ourselves, so we could only ask for help from humans. It's a sickness, can't you see? Nothing will change by praying! If we have that much free time, we should cook something that will make the sick people healthy, we should encourage them!"

That's the most natural thing to do, but I can't tell them those words. I tap Chloe's shoulder instead.

"I don't put that in my mind, it's okay. More importantly, we should hurry and go to the

head's place, remember?"

"Sorry, even though you've been troubled by coming here."

"I've predicted this much at least, it's okay."

With that, we continue walking under the stares of the surrounding crowd. The interesting part is that Tina keeps receiving a different kind of showering stares than mine. The villagers' eyes show astonishment and endearment. They seem to want to call Tina over, but since she makes herself small behind me while gripping the hem of her clothes, they hesitate to do so.

Just what exact kind of existence was Tina's mother to this village?



We are guided towards a large one-floored wooden building in the village. It's obviously befitting of the village head's building.

"Colt-ojisa... cough, the head lives here. Wait a moment, okay?"

Chloe knocks on the door. Then, the door opens. There's a female elf. She seems to be in her twenties.

"Chloe, what are you coming here today for?"

"Farina-san. I have two people whom I'd like to bring to the head. Would you please call him for me?"

"That's not a problem, but,"

Saying that, the female elf looks at me and lets out a faint shriek. After that, she looks at Tina, and her eyes go open wide. She looks flustered as she goes inside the establishment.

Dozens of minutes later, we can hear thudding sound of quite lively footsteps. The one who shows up is a silver-haired fox-eared male who looks around 35 years old. He has a sturdy body and seems to possess an odd presence.

The moment he lays his eyes upon Tina, he smiles with tears running down his face.

“Culrina, you have finally come home, haven’t you, Culrina?”

Then, he turns and rushes over to Tina’s side.

Tina lets out a small “hii” sound and hides behind my back.

But that still doesn’t stop the man.

“I was lonely, I was truly lonely. Finally you have returned to Papa’s place. It must have been hard on you to go out of the village, right? Right now, you should get plenty of rest.”

He’s wailing while hugging not Tina, but me.

It’s quite uncomfortable.

“The struggle must have been hard on you, to become all muscles like this... wait, what kind of hardship could, this is...”

After a while, it seems like he finally realizes that Tina isn’t the one he’s currently hugging.

“Uhm, nice to meet you. I’m Kurt, a human. I came here to heed Chloe’s call.”

When I said that, the man before my eyes shoves himself away. Then, after wearing a terribly disappointed face, he turns serious.

“This is truly impolite. Human... no, Kurt. Talk later. There’s an urgent matter that I need to address now.”

I was certain that he would have lashed out, but he unexpectedly became calm instead. Then his gaze is locked on Tina for the second time.

“Culrinaaaaaaaaaa!”

Then he rushes for the second time.

This time, Chloe opens her arms and stands to block him in front of Tina.

“Colt-ojisan, stop! This girl is a spitting image of Culrina-anesama, but they’re different

people.”

As soon as Colt hears that, he hits the brake. His face is frigid, due to the extreme shock, his silver fox ears are flattening. It’s the same as Tina’s depressed look, but he looks like on the verge of a smile.

“But, no matter how I see her”

“She’s Tina. Culrina-anesama’s daughter.”

The moment he hears Chloe’s words, he’s showing a disappointed yet happy face, a complicated expression.

“I see, you’re not Culrina. But, her daughter... Has it been that long?”

The words he spit out are full of bitterness. I could tell what kind of person he is from the development so far. Silver ears, the same as Tina’s. Then, the adoring words for Culrina the moment he thought she had come back home.

Most likely, he’s Tina’s grandfather.

He looks only as old as 35, but beastkin’s age cannot be predicted by how old they look.

Until 15 or 16, they grow even faster than humans, but after that, it’s a slow growth for them. Their lifespan is the same as humans, but their unique trait is that they look young until they die. In reality, Tina’s grandfather should be close to fifty years old, but he looks young.

“Once again, let me introduce myself. I’m Kurt. As a doctor, I came to the spirit village for the sake of healing the epidemic upon Chloe’s request. And this girl is Tina. She’s my assistant.”

Because the situation has calmed down, I do another introduction.

Colt, Tina’s grandfather, inhales deeply to calm down further before speaking.

“I am Colt, head of the spirit village. Thank you for specially coming to this village. Then, I’m deeply grateful to you for bringing my granddaughter here. Let’s talk more inside the house. There are a lot of things that I wish to hear about.”

With that, we are invited to enter the house of the head of the spirit village, Tina's grandfather.

Chapter 22

Lives and Rules

We are led into the house of Colt, the man with silver fox ears and Tina's grandfather. His house's interior design gives me the image of Japan somehow. As I thought, they have different culture than townspeople.

"This is the parlor. Make yourself at home."

It's a culture without the usage of tables and chairs, as Colt sits upon the tatami-like floor by folding his legs in seiza. Chloe the elf also sits at his side. Following after them, Tina and I sit down as well.

The female elf who showed up earlier came to serve some tea. She should be the house helper here.

After calmly choosing the moment, Colt is the one initiating the conversation.

"Firstly, Kurt. Thank you for putting your life on the line by coming to the spirit village even after hearing about the disease outbreak."

Colt lowers his head.

It shocks me, a little.

I heard of how they are from an elusive race, I assumed that I was going to be told to scurry away without even listening to what I have to say.

"Please lift your head. It's not yet known whether I can cure the disease or not."

"Even so, I wish to express my gratitude for putting your life on the line and coming here. Then, you have my deepest gratitude for bringing my granddaughter here."

Colt stares at Tina fixedly. In his eyes, there's nothing but affection. As if she notices that, Tina's wariness slightly dissipates.

Tina opens her mouth.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Tina. That. Are you, my ojiisama?”

“If Tina is Culrina’s daughter, you’re my granddaughter.”

“...In that case, I am your granddaughter.”

“I see. Tina. I’m happy to be able to see you. You look exactly like Culrina.”

“I am also the daughter of the man who eloped with my mother. Do you hate me?”

Colt makes a shocked expression. Then, he smiles.

“As if I could hate Culrina’s daughter. Even now, I still love that child. Besides, I don’t have any bad impression of that man. I still have the grudge over taking Culrina away, but I can understand why she would fall in love with him. He’s a good man.”

“Then, why did you banish them from the spirit village!?”

Tina raises her voice. She’s so sure that he would be more evil, the embodiment of devil with prejudice against humans, but the man in front of her doesn’t seem to fit the shoes.

“That’s because it’s the village’s rule. We cannot allow any human to live in this village. This land, in the first place, was built to be a shelter for those who were chased away from their homes or have been the victims of humankind. There are a lot of folks who despise humans. As their head, I cannot break the rules that I initiated.”

I can relate to him. If the ruler cannot protect the rules, no one will accept them.

“However, in the end, as a father, I’ve done something that I cannot ever forgive...”

Colt shakes his head, his voice rebuking himself.

“Actually, there’s nothing to forgive or not to forgive. Culrina made her choice; that’s all there is to it. Living outside with a human. Or living in this land being separated from him. Culrina, with her own will, chose to be with the person she loved more than being in this village. I respected and supported her wish. That’s because I thought it would lead to Culrina’s happiness. Besides, I told her that she could always return.”

Colt is speaking in a plain manner. Even though he expressed how lonely he was just now, he still followed his reasoning.

“That’s... That is too...”

“At that time, Culrina and I reached a mutual conclusion. Most likely, if we forced this village to accept a human among us, both Culrina and the villagers would suffer.”

Tina couldn’t say anything.

Even though she understood the logic, she surely couldn’t agree with it in her heart.

Colt throws a question at that Tina.

“Tell me one thing. Is Culrina doing well?”

“Mother, along with Father, died from an illness.”

“...I see. If only they had their happy moments after living outside the village, I would be saved.”

“Indeed, they had.”

Colt covers the corner of his eyes for a second. A single teardrop falls. However, when he removes his hand after so many seconds, his expression is calm.

“Tina, after Culrina passed away, has life been treating you badly?”

“I’m all right. I’ve been under Kurt-sama’s care ever since.”

When Tina tells him that, Colt looks in my direction.

“I am a doctor as well as a noble who looks after a fief. I met Tina who just lost her parents on the roadside and employed her as a servant. Right now, she has long surpassed a servant, she’s been helping me as my assistant.”

He must have been interested in his granddaughter’s well being. I let him know the way it truly is.

“So Kurt has saved Tina. My gratitude to you has just grown deeper and deeper... Tina.

If it's all right with you, the spirit village... No, please forget what I just said."

In the middle of asking Tina to come home, Colt stopped. It shouldn't be because he has any ill will about Tina. Since this village is rampant with epidemic, Tina won't become happy if she returns here. I can tell that much by looking at his eyes.

We are enveloped by a suffocating silence for a short while.

"My apologies for bringing up my personal issue. Shall we get to the main problem? Kurt, you said that you came here as a doctor to save this village... but, my apologies. Can you go home instead?"

I swallow my breath. I didn't expect to crash into those words at this timing.

"Wait— Colt-ojisan! What are you saying?!"

"Chloe, this is my judgment as the village head. Do be quiet."

"But! He might just be able to save everyone!"

"If you're making more ruckus, you may excuse yourself out of here."

Colt admonished the noisy Chloe.

This has turned ugly.

"Is it because you have no faith in my power?"

"The problem lies before that. The spirit village has decided to live without having anything to do with humans. It's as simple as that. I'm very grateful that Kurt has come here. I will reward your kindness and courage accordingly. However, I can't borrow a human's strength."

So it's decided.

I also understand that rule.

However...

"If you are not the only one who reached that conclusion, I will consider it."

I naturally open my mouth to object.

“I am the head of the village. It is my obligation to decide what goes in this village.”

“Indeed you should. However, we’re now in the state of emergency. For the sake of Culrina’s happiness, you could decide whether she left the village to live with human or remained alone in this village. Why was it that you didn’t make that choice with the whole village?”

It’s a half accusation. However, I don’t think that I’m saying the wrong thing.

“Kurt, I wish you’d speak in a way that I’d understand.”

“I understand that there’s a rule that no human will be relied upon in this village. However, I think that we need to ask those who are currently suffering from this sickness, whether they die like this, without borrowing a human’s power. Or, if they wish to leave the village as the price of violating the rule and having their lives saved by a human.”

This is an extreme argument. They die, or they break the rules and get banished from the village. I have no qualms in leaving those with death wishes. However, there’s no reason to leave the others to die, those who can’t make peace with their deaths. If it’s me, I’ll definitely pick the road to live.

“There’s some truth to your words, Kurt. Then, what would become of them if they go out of this village? They’re all folks who know nothing outside of the life in this village.”

“They can choose to take care of my fief. Just their luck, I’m still lacking manpower in my village. Moreover, Tina is the perfect example. There’s a land that will welcome other races than human.”

“We will only be the feed for humans.”

“When you look at Tina, do you really think that I’m that kind of human?”

Tina tightens her grip on the hem of my shirt. The fact that she completely trusts me probably reaches Colt as well.

“...Honestly, what a glib-tongued man. However, that’s a fair argument. I see. Indeed, there are those who wish to live.”

Colt smiles bitterly before looking at me straight in the eyes and speaking up.

“What is the compensation that you’re aiming for? I’m sure that you’re not here simply out of obligation, right, Kurt?”

It directly escalates to that point, huh? Oh, well, not that I mind.

“Originally, if I can save this village, I want a tenth of one year’s worth of the pinal and papple fruits that you harvest here.”

“Is that amount good?”

Colt asks with a puzzled look.

“The pinal fruit that Chloe treated us to is a very outstanding fruit. So outstanding that it’s actually enough to exchange for healing those who are sick.”

“You’re extraordinarily honest, aren’t you? I thought that humans were more greedy.”

“I’m greedy enough, actually. It’s something that I absolutely need for the sake of achieving my dream.”

According to Chloe, for the rich spirit village, the amount requested should cost them virtually nothing. They don’t trade the fruits away, so those they don’t eat will just be thrown away.

However, for Arnold, those thrown fruits are as precious as gems. If I have the pinal fruit from this place, I can make a large profit in my pastry business.

“However, the circumstances have changed. If I save the whole village, that much is sufficient, but I want a seedling of pinal and papple fruit tree for each person that I save. Moreover, the banished folks will have to come to my village. I’ll lend my hand for that. I’m planning to grow the fruits in my village.”

It’ll need time to reach the point where I can harvest them, but securing both future harvests and the manpower aren’t bad conditions to trade for.

“The reward in itself is not a problem. However, I cannot give you an immediate reply on the issue of sending the villagers with you. This is on the prerequisite that you can indeed cure the sickness to begin with. First, why don’t you examine the current

patients. After you've confirmed that you can treat them, we'll continue this talk. There are patients in the second floor."

Colt stands up and gives us a cue to follow him. He should be intending to bring us to the sick ward.

"Tina and Chloe, please stay here. It'll be bad if we add more people who might contract the disease."

When meeting the sick, there's a danger of being contaminated. It should be all right if I'm the only one who gets exposed to the danger.

"No way, I'm going too. She is my mother, after all! In this case, I have to be together with her all the more!"

"I understand. Chloe should go with us too."

With that, leaving Tina behind, the three of us head over to the patients.

I can't put it into words, but I do have a bad feeling about this. I have a bad premonition. If the premonition is correct, speaking right before we're going to deal with it, this village will soon perish.

While sincerely praying that my premonition is a miss, I'm starting up.

Chapter 23

I Won't Let This Man Die

I was guided to the bedrooms on the second floor of this mansion.

There's a beautiful female elf lying down on the bed.

Seeing her pained eyes, Colt, the man in his prime age with silver fox ears, stares down before speaking.

"She is Chloe's mother, my younger sister. Since two weeks ago, she's been complaining about feeling fatigue, losing her appetite, and coughing violently until she coughs blood. She's been sweating profusely, much more than anything."

Colt and this female elf, being brother and sister of different races, isn't something rare in this world. Interracial children will be born perfectly inheriting only one side of their parent's races.

"Thank you for describing the symptoms to me. Then, I'll begin the examination."

I touch her forehead, then activate the first step of my [^{Heal}Recovery] ability. Using [^{Heal}Recovery] in the early stage will let me know everything about the target.

What it does tell me is how the patient is suffering from the disease. Moreover, it's spreading through bacteria to those who can't build the antibodies. Her lungs are completely finished. There is no hope to let them heal by themselves. She'll probably draw her last breath in less than a month.

Moreover, this bacteria is spread through the air. This type of infection is usually incurable. It's a complex disease with striking similarity to pulmonary tuberculosis, which is said to be incurable until recently even on earth. With the level of facilities in this world, there's nothing that could be done about it.

However, I can heal it using my [^{Heal}Recovery].

“I understood the characteristics of the disease.”

“Are you saying that you understand it just from holding her forehead?”

“Yes, I’m a Magic user. I can use Magic to heal people.”

When he heard it, Colt became speechless. The fact that someone possesses Magic is their most well guarded secret. Due to the scarcity, if it’s known by others, they will put themselves in danger. And that’s even before counting the extremely high value of my ^{Heal} [Recovery], it’s truly not a secret that I can divulge to anyone.

“Is it all right to tell me that?”

“Yeah, because this is the only way to do it. This disease is not a joke. We have no time to hesitate nor to put up appearances. If it’s left alone, the village will perish. Besides, I trust you.”

It’s because Colt loves Tina’s mother and Tina herself, that I could entrust him with this secret.

“I’m about to wrong you with this, but why are you willing to cure this disease this far? Can you tell me your reason?”

Colt’s hands are trembling. He should be in fear of the reality that I shoved in his face.

“First of all, this sickness cannot be healed on its own. A certain bacteria... the source of the disease resides in the lungs, and there is nothing in a person’s body that could resist this source. Moreover, the medicine that could kill this source of disease doesn’t exist in this world. This source will continue to multiply, rendering the body weak, and finally causing death. I’ll repeat it to you, self-healing is impossible.”

Upon that truth, Colt’s face warps in agony. He seems to hold the expectations that the sickness will someday be healed with time.

“There’s something else.”

“Can it be something worse than this?”

“Yes. After contracting this disease, the source will multiply inside the person, then

travel through the air as they cough. Then, inside the air that they cough out, the source of the disease will continue to multiply. Before long, those who are still healthy at this moment will show symptoms due to the increase of the source. Then, the source of the disease will scatter even further.”

A disease outbreak is inevitable if it's left alone.

When Chloe arrived in my village, I checked if she was a disease carrier, but she was still all right at that time. However, infecting the few number of residents in this village who haven't showed symptoms yet is only a matter of time.

“...It's truly a dreadful thing. Then, at this point-”

“Without healing all of the patients at once, the infected people will only increase. After some time, the momentum of the contagion will increase.”

I shed off any consideration and tell him the plain facts. If there's any hesitation here, the damage will intensify.

“If that's the truth... This village is done for.”

“If you can possibly rely on me, I can heal every patient with my Magic. You should gather those who starts showing the symptoms and I can heal everyone at once. One more thing to add, after being healed, there's still a concern of relapse. I should come regularly to do the examination.”

That's a pragmatic response. With this, everything can be settled.

Because there's no response from Colt, I continue speaking.

“If you're thinking of saving this village without borrowing my power, you should immediately quarantine all people who show symptoms. Even just by being physically close to the patients, the damage will be done. Ah, no, it's better if they are killed, because they will only suffer until their death. You'll need to do the same to the next people who are infected... By doing it in the quarantined area, you should be able to minimize the damage.”

It's a proceeding that is exceedingly inhumane. However, the situation truly calls for it.

“...As if I could quarantine my precious fellow villagers. Moreover, killing them.”

“In that case, let me lend you a hand. I’ll show you that I’ll heal everyone.”

“I cannot borrow the strength of a human either.”

“Then the village will perish. That’s all there is to it.”

Colt sinks into silence.

I let his head turn desperately. His obligation as the head and as a man, both are severely torturing him.

“Let’s go back to the topic. My words earlier, about carrying out the plan to let the patients, who break the rules by being healed by me and get banished from the village, going to my fief to take care of it, can be put into realization. I wish to save those who still hold their will to live even with banishment as a repercussion... However, if there’s a single person left in this village who still carries the disease, eventually all the villagers will succumb to death. I wish you will decide as the head of this village while keeping that in mind.”

I bluntly lay it all out in the open.

Just like he said, here in this spirit village, I am an outsider. I wish to save this village for Tina’s sake. I intend to lend all my power. The circumstance is as it is. I already stopped thinking of hiding [Recovery] ^{Heal} either way.

Even so, in the end, without depending on Colt’s decision, I can’t do anything.

Chloe, who has been staring intently at us throughout the conversation, stands in front of me. She glares at Colt.

“What are you hesitating for, Colt-ojisan!?”

“...Chloe.”

“Let’s be saved. Aren’t the lives of everyone more important than the village rules!? For me, everyone’s lives are more important than that. If Colt-ojisan can’t reach that conclusion, I’ll go around and convince all the sick people one by one. And then, with

my mother and everyone who gets healed, I'll bring the survivors to Kurt's village!"

That surprised me, a bit.

Chloe is composed. With a cool head, she's thinking about the way to save not only her mother, but many others. With the current state, it should be the way to save the most people.

"I... I..... I have decided. Kurt, I want you to accept it."

Colt makes me grasp something he puts in my palm. When I open it, there's a beautiful jade-colored orb.

"This orb is called jade. The heart of an elf who passed on will become an orb. This is my mother's keepsake. Among the elves, it's a custom to pass their jade orb to someone precious to them on their death. Once, humans hunted down the elves to obtain them. They're not only beautiful, they also have the capability to increase mana."

"I knew about jade orb. I used to think that it was ultimately a myth, though."

I can feel mana emanating from the orb in my palm. Such a soul-stealing fascinating translucent color. This one stone is probably more valuable than the whole Arnold fief.

"I'll present it to you, Kurt. It's an advance payment for the doctor's treatment. Can you help with Chloe's request? First, I want you to heal my sister."

To have been told in that manner, I don't have any reason to refuse. And what's more intriguing is...

"Is it all right to let me know that this material can be found in the elves' heart? If I were to fall to my greed and start to hunt them down..."

"You will bring a company of humans and strike this village down. Correct? But Kurt won't do anything like that. It's to return the favor of letting me know about your Magic."

Colt smiles faintly.

To be told that much, there's no way I can betray him.

I'm holding on to the jade orb. My mana shoots up on its own.

"Then, I'm healing... ^{Heal} [Recovery]."

I invoke my Magic. A warm light envelops the female elf, then the disease is cured. And then, the pained sleeping face evens out, her breath calms down, and she's no longer sweating.

Chloe's face turns into a wide smile, falls onto her knees, and grasps the female elf's hand with both of hers.

"Colt-ojisan, mother, is, mother is, healthy. This peaceful face, it's the first time since she's fallen sick."

"You're right. Such a terrific power. She's healed in such a short time."

There's no surprise here. My ^{Heal} [Recovery]'s power is *that* abnormal.

"Chloe, Kurt. I've decided. I wish to save those who can be saved. The truth is, I want to bend the rules and cure everyone. However, there are folks who will definitely refuse a human's treatment. I can't change their hearts. And from what you told me, if any single one of the sick remained, the disease would still spread. It's a deadlock, but at the very least, I wish you will save those who have the will to live outside.

Colt's eyes show his resolution. Those are from a sorrowful resolution.

"What are you planning to do?"

"I will look after this village until the very end. As the head. I'll keep struggling to save as many as possible until the end. I will show them a peaceful end, by implementing the quarantine method that Kurt mentioned."

I'm thinking now.

If I become the feudal lord, will I be able to face this kind of unavoidable collapse of Arnold with this composure? Then, will I be able to think about my people until death stares at me in the eyes?

If Colt is only thinking about his own life, he knows that he can go to my fief along with

Chloe. But even so, he decided to save as many lives as possible instead.

I want to be this kind of man. That's why, I won't let him die.

Then, I shall put it into action. Not only by this convenient [Recovery]^{Heal} power. As Kurt Arnold, I shall go all out without anything to spare.

"I refuse. this single stone is not enough for me to take care of everything."

"*Fumu*, is that so? Then it's all right. If it's something within my power to do, you may request anything. It's fine even if I have to gather all existing jade orbs in this village."

Colt looked at me with disappointment clouding his eyes. Those eyes are saying that I am still a greedy human after all.

"What I want is the best fruits. If this village perishes, I will be troubled."

However, with a single sentence from me, that disappointment turns into astonishment.

"Rather than jade orbs, you want fruits?"

"Yes. I am indeed a doctor and a lord, but I am also a ^{pâtissier}pastry chef. More than any precious jewels, delicious fruits are more attractive to me."

Colt looks at me while I retort, then he laughs.

"Hahahaha, to think that that's what you want to suddenly say. What an interesting man you are, Kurt."

"It's no laughing matter. I mean it. Colt-san, you said it yourself, right? [In this circumstance, I want to bend the rules and cure everyone. However, there are folks who will definitely refuse a human's treatment. I can't change their hearts.] So in that case, I will show you that I can persuade them."

"That is impossible. There are way more folks who refuse humans than you thought, Kurt. Even if they understand that you're a doctor who can heal them, the probability of persuading them is still nonexistent."

That should indeed be the case. A doctor's words might not be able to reach them.

But then, even so.

“I am a ^{pâtissier} pastry chef. The power of delicious pastries transcend racial barriers. I will definitely reach their hearts.”

I swear by my pride, that my pastry will smash down the wall of even the most obstinate folk’s heart.

That, is my resolution.

Chapter 24

Kudzu Starch and Special Wine

There are two things that I requested from Colt, while grandly posing as someone who can persuade the spirit village residents with the power of pastries.

First, I want him to prepare a venue to hold all of the remaining healthy folks. I will entertain them with my pastries there.

The second, to let me borrow one room for all my food preparation.

After healing Chloe's mother, we hold a strategy meeting.

It's a tiny form of cheating, but I'm going to heal everyone who still hasn't shown the symptoms with my [Recovery]. I'm going to stealthily cast my Magic while handing out the pastry to everyone individually. By the time that they finish eating the pastry, I will show that the pastry will act as the silver bullet measurement against the illness. Afterwards, I will persuade them to let the sick folks eat them too. That's the proceedings that I have in mind.

This is Tina's idea, actually. By doing this, I can stay away from leaking out the existence of my Magic. I didn't intend to obtain their approval by doing anything except displaying my pastry to them, at first. However, it's a good idea. The number of lucky villagers are less than two hundred, so this plan is possible to do.

All that's left is to make a delicious pastry that anyone, even sick folks, can eat.



"Kurt-sama, you can do it anytime!"

"Yeah, let's go. Tina."

After being guided to the room we're staying in, we drop our belongings and go outside. It's for the sake of ensuring the pastry ingredients for tomorrow.

The main ingredient this time, is the peach-like pinal fruit. The other one, is...

“Kurt-sama, there’s a lot growing here. Let’s carry as much as we can.”

“I know, let’s get them in one go.”

Yes, it’s the kudzu that’s growing on the bank of the water canal.

I can make kudzu starch from the roots. And these are such outstanding kudzu, of course they must have outstanding roots.

A pastry that will use pinal and kudzu starch. That’s tomorrow’s pastry.

“O Earth.”

I’m crouching, then grabbing the soil’s surface. My magic arte has the earth element. I’m using that power now. The earth is shaking up, then pushing out kudzu roots to the surface.

The kudzu root is about as thick as Tina’s thigh, and not only big, they’ve also grown to meters long.



“Uwaa, so huge. It’s just like the yams.”

“It’s been soaking in plenty of nutrition. Maybe, it’s thanks to the water and land of the spirit village. It’s definitely a great ingredient for the pastry.”

It’s only by chance that we can obtain plenty of starch from the root to stockpile just before winter; there shouldn’t be a problem to raise them from this.

“Tina, please wash the root and tie it with strings. We’ll go home after bringing enough.”

“Yes, Kurt-sama.”

Tina washes kudzu root in the waterway in a breeze, then ties them all up together. After digging up the necessary amount, I join her too. Then we stack them all up, strengthen our bodies, and bring them with us.

“It doesn’t look like anything but a tree root, but these will become pastries, right?”

Just after starting to carry them away, Tina starts talking.

“You’re right. It needs some work, but the kudzu starch made from kudzu roots is the best ingredient for pastries.”

Normally, kudzu starch will need three days to to be made from the moment I decide to make it. However, this time, with a bit of compromise in the quality, I intend to make it in one night.



Returning to the room we borrowed, I pour plenty of water into a water jug. Then, I place the kudzu root on top of a stone plank that I made with earth magic arte. I keep piling them up on the plank.

I use earth magic arte. The stone moves and smashes the kudzu roots until they become fibrous. Then I put the smashed kudzu roots into the water jug. This time, I also put small stones into the water jug. Then I invoke my earth magic arte. The stones smash the kudzu root around, producing some juice flowing that will become kudzu starch.

Smashing the kudzu root, as well as squeezing out the juice, are originally hard labors. However, thanks to the magic arte, it's become easier.

I can sense someone behind me. Chloe the elf has arrived. She's carrying a basket on her back containing a lot of peach... pinal fruits, as well as grape-like papple fruits. I asked her to pick some to use in the pastry.

She looks at me doing the labor, then with a startled face she speaks. "Ah, you really do use that grass."

For her folks, kudzu is just an annoying weed. Using that in a pastry is something queer to them. But that's exactly why there's a meaning to use it.

"Of course. Or rather, what I use isn't the grass, but the root. Oh, right, thanks for the hard work to gather all these pinal fruit and papple."

"You can rest assured, I picked the most delicious and mature pinal fruits properly. And as you said, I only picked the sour paples."

Aside from the peach-like pinal fruit, this time I'm using grape-like papple fruit as well.

"I'm glad, then. Our work here is almost done too."

After wringing out all the juice, I take out the roots. Inside the water jug, there's only tea-colored liquid. After that, I'm straining out the pulp root and small stones.

"*Fuun*, so you squeezed out the smashed root in the water. Then what are you doing next?"

"I'm leaving it overnight. The bottom part will become thick and pure white, while the top part will become pure black. I'm going to use the white part and throw out the top part."

It's the so-called scum removal. The scum will be dissolved in the water, gathering on top, while the starch will be deposited at the bottom. That starch at the bottom will harden and become kudzu starch.

Doing this in one day, actually, won't be able to remove all the impurities. The purity will improve when the process is repeated twice or thrice, but I don't have that much time. It'll become a more or less low quality kudzu starch, but I don't have any choice

except to compromise.

“So that’s it. This is scum removal, right? We always do this for edible wild plants too.”

“The one and the same.”

The details are different, but the way to do it is the same.

“In that case, I can be of help, I think.”

Chloe moves closer to me then peers into the water jug. I’m startled by how close her face is.

“Ei!”

When Chloe holds the water jug up, the water starts to undulate.

“What on earth are you trying to do?”

“I’m working the water up, increasing the melting power.”

“You can do something that convenient?”

“Easy-peasy. I’m only cheering on Water-san to do their best.”

Like Chloe says, the water’s brown tea color turns into black with great vigor. The scum is gathering on top, while the starch sinks to the bottom. The work that originally requires an overnight is completed in one second.

“I’m surprised. Water magic arte can do something like that too. With this, the end result won’t be compromised.”

In a breeze, I throw out the darkened water on the top. Only the white liquid remains at the bottom, tinged with tea-color, which I filter to set the impurities apart.

Without Chloe, I meant to dry the liquid and turn it into kudzu starch, but with Chloe’s magic arte, I can repeat the process to improve the purity now. I don’t have to compromise.

Adding clear water, the preparation is all set.

“Chloe, I can count on you one more time, right?”

“Un, leave it to me.”

Chloe invokes her water magic arte once again. Like before, the top becomes murky black. The rest is the same. I throw out the murky black top, then the brown-stained white liquid at the bottom becomes purer in white.

I repeat the process for the third time, and now the liquid body has become pure white.

“*Hee*, how pretty. I’m surprised that we can get this from that grass.”

“This pure white liquid will become white clumps once the water content dries out. Once they’re smashed to dust, they’ll become a powder called kudzu starch. It’ll become the best ingredient for pastries.”

“It’s quite a lot of work, huh?”

“Normally, it’ll take three days to make. And it’ll be worth it. Thanks to you, Chloe, I can make it in one night.”

“Hmm, let’s try to shorten that one night too. The next is just to make the water dry, right?”

“That’s true, so?”

“In that case, I can ask the pure Water-san to move aside.”

After saying that, she invokes her water magic arte. The water content from the white liquid completely dissipates, leaving white clumps behind. I can smell a faint sweet scent. When I touch it, it feels really smooth.

I break the tip apart. It turns into powder that’s finer than sugar.

It’s perfectly done... This is the kudzu starch that I wanted to make. If chefs from my previous world heard that kudzu starch can be made this quickly, they’ll probably cry.

“It’s the best that it can be. Thank you, Chloe. You’re a great help. It’s the first time I’ve ever seen kudzu starch this fine.”

I grab her hands, telling her how much I'm grateful.

It's kudzu starch that has received plenty of blessings from the water and land of the spirit village, made into the highest purity thanks to water magic arte.

My blood is boiling as a chef to showcase this highest grade ingredient.

"*M, maa*, sure, from now on, I'll help a lot too, so leave it to me. Kurt is my mother's savior, and besides, since I've broken the rules, I'll be under the care of Kurt's village, so."

Chloe's face turns red as she bashfully replies.

I once refused to acknowledge Chloe's notion of coming to my village in her latter words, but since she said that it would be better if she became the intermediary with the village, I've come to take advantage of her will.

Once the matter of this disease is settled, she will come to my village.

"Now, then, we've finished the kudzu starch way faster than we planned thanks to Chloe, shall we chat for a while? About the pastry that I will serve to everyone this time, there are two things that we absolutely need to protect. Tina, Chloe, do you know what they are?"

The two of them sink into their thoughts after my question. Then, Tina is the first one to speak up.

"Is it that it has to be delicious?"

"That's also important, but the answer that I'm expecting for is slightly different."

Making it delicious is just the principle. Even without being in this circumstance, it's essential.

"Ah, I got it. Something that everyone hasn't eaten before."

"Correct. Then, the reason is?"

"When we're taking it out and telling them that it's medicine, if it's not something that they haven't eaten before, we won't have any persuasiveness."

“You’re right on point. That’s why I’m using kudzu. No one in this village has eaten kudzu before. By using it, I can make a mysterious pastry that no one has ever seen before. On top of that, kudzu is really good for the body. It’s not a lie to call it medicine too.”

“Yay! I’m totally right!”

Tina made a small guts pose.

The rarity and the presentation impact. I decided to use kudzu to stage those two factors.

Actually, as a medicine, kudzu has various effects. It can excrete the waste products in the blood system, promote blood circulation, warm the body, improve the immune system, stabilize the autonomic nerves, promote the endocrine functions, and prevent senility. It’s given the highest praise as the panacea in ancient Japan and China.

“Tina, amazing. You got to be correct. I have to be correct too... *nnnn*, got it! It has to be easy to eat. It can’t become medicine if it’s not a gentle pastry that can be easily eating by the sick!”

“You’re absolutely correct. What I must make is a rare pastry that no one has ever eaten before, and that it has to be a gentle pastry that can be consumed by the patients to top it off.”

It’s actually quite difficult. It’s already hard to make a rare pastry that they haven’t eaten before, but a delicious pastry is fundamentally heavy on the fat percentage, making it very heavy in taste.

“Kurt-sama, can you make that kind of pastry?”

“Yes, I can. Since we have this kudzu.”

“I’m looking forward to it. I want to quickly eat it.”

What I’m making is western pastry using *wagashi* technique. This is my one specialty pastry that earned me victory in a concour when I was studying abroad.

Anyone in the spirit village will enjoy the taste and beautiful presentation that they’ve never savored before.

“About that, have you obtained the one other thing that I requested, Chloe?”

“Ah, I forgot to mention it. Yes. Here. Wine made in the spirit village. I never heard using wine in pastry before, you know?”

Chloe fetches a bottled sake from the basket on her back. It is essential for this pastry. I requested the strongest wine that she could find, I wonder how it turned out. I'll take a look at it.

When I cut the seal open, there's a peculiar grainy characteristic to it, but it's such a gorgeous fragrant that's tinged with some fruit.

My eyes are widening. This is.

“Isn't it wine made from rice?” I said without thinking.

The taste is so nostalgic that I feel like tearing up. It tastes like some Japanese *sake*. Moreover, my tongue is covered with a slight sweetness that comes from top quality sake.

“Rice? That's wine made from *ramama*, though?”

“Ramama? Is that a grain plant with lots of small white grains?”

“*Un*, that's right. It's the main staple of the spirit village.”

It has to be rice. Is this spirit village a paradise on earth?

Now I have all the more reasons not to let this village perish. I want to eat the rice that I haven't seen in a long time.

“Well, because you told me the strongest wine, you should be able to use it. I took it out of Colt-ojisan's treasured stash.”

“Yeah, it's enough. With this, I can make the best pastry.”

I'm quickly altering the recipe that I've assembled in my mind. Then the finished shape rose to the surface of my mind.

It's going to be an even more amazing pastry than what I initially imagined.

Chapter 25

Light Snow Silk Crepe

The ingredients that I have in hand are a strong *sake* made from rice, peach-like pinal fruit, grape-like papple fruit, and kudzu starch. Only these.

However, these are plenty. I can make the best pastry.

“We’ve gathered the ingredients, the cooking preparation can start now. I can handle the rest on my own, so the two of you please go home and rest. Tomorrow will be a hard, long day.”

When I say that, Tina the pretty girl with silver fox ears and Chloe the blonde haired beauty shake their heads.

“Kurt-sama, I’m your partner. Let me help you!”

“I just want to stay and look since it’s interesting. Besides I might be able to help with my water magic arte.”

I smile bitterly. Oh, well, if they want to be my company, I don’t have any reason to waste effort to refuse them, huh?

“I got it. Then I’ll accept your help. I’ll be under your care, okay?”

“Yes, Kurt-sama.”

“Un, leave it to me.”

They look quite eager.

I’m heating up the pot. Then, first I’m boiling down the rice wine that Chloe brought, until the remaining portion is a sweet syrup with the wine’s umami. It’s a feat that can only be achieved with wine of high sugar content.

After that is done, I add water into the sweet syrup, putting in the pinal fruit that has

been peeled and cut, then adding in the juice from the grape-like papple fruit. The papple fruit that Chloe has put the effort to gather is added for the acidity.

The scent of wine, peach, and grape is wafting around the vicinity. Then I add the pink peeled skin of the pinal fruit. With this, it will turn into vibrant pink color.

What I'm cooking right now is pinal fruit compote.

Compote is a European traditional fruit cooking process, created by boiling fruit with water, sweetened water, or Western liquor. It's different from jams, as it retains the fruit body's mouthfeel texture and flavor, and can be eaten alone.

Absorbing the complex umami and elegant sweetness from rice wine, as well as the acidity from papple, the pinal will become more delicious. Actually, compote is made with lemon and western liquor, but for pinal, papple is a better fit. Products from the same land have great compatibility.

"Uwaa, Kurt-sama. It smells great."

"Sheesh, I want to eat it right away."

These two are completely immersed in this fragrance. It's understandable; even I feel that drool is pooling inside my mouth.

"It's still far from being finished, it's on its way, you know. The pastry baking starts now."

After enough time, I quench the fire. It's just in the right pink color.

"Now we've completed the first step. Next, we need to completely remove the heat and let it sit overnight. Only then the deliciousness will settle in. Tina, can you make a lot of ice?"

"Of course, Kurt-sama!"

I made Tina create ice with her fire magic arte. The essence of fire magic arte is heat manipulation. It's not difficult to create ice with it.

"It's a pity but this is all we can do for today. The rest is for tomorrow."

Hearing my words, the two of them make disappointed faces.

“I see, so we can’t eat it today...”

“Right... But should we get a small freebie?”

I take out the lukewarm pinal compote and cut it down into small pieces. Then, I toss them into their mouths.

After they’re done with their shocked expressions, they chew into it soundly.

“This is really amazing. Adult taste. Raw pinal is delicious too, but it has a wonderful and more complex flavor.”

I’m smiling. When Tina ate the raw fruit, she looked quite moved. At that time, I vowed to myself that I’d make her feel moved more than eating it raw.

“I’m surprised too. I thought that raw pinal is the best, but it can be eaten like this too.”

Chloe the elf also seems to feel the extreme deliciousness, as she keeps peeking into the pinal compote in the pot after eating her portion just now, looking like she hasn’t had enough.

“I’m happy if it pleases the two of you. But if you’re surprised with this, your body can’t handle it, you know? After sitting overnight, it will become more delicious, and the kudzu pastry made with it will become even more delicious. This is merely the lowest level.”

Their eyes are shining with blatant expectations.

「明日が
待ち遠しいよー!」

「早く食べたい
です!」



“Aaah, I want to eat it soon!”

“Right? Tomorrow can’t arrive too quickly!”

Being able to please them to this extent, it’s worth making. While continuing in a good mood, I remove the remaining heat and bottle up the pinal compote. And then, I spread ice inside the water jug, putting in the bottle that has been completely wrapped with cloth, and seal the cap. Doing this will make it stay cooled until tomorrow noon.

“Now, let’s go back to our rooms. We can make the best pastry. So let’s have a strategy meeting so that people will eat that pastry.”

“Yes!”

“Right? We have to save everyone!”

With hope in our hearts, we return to our room.



In the next morning, I come back to the kitchen. Of course it’s to start making the pastry. Chloe and Tina are making breakfast in Colt’s mansion.

Cooled down properly, I take out the bottled pinal compote from the water jug. I’m sampling the taste.

“Yes, it’s a great flavor. It’s immersed just right.”

After one night, the flavor has developed well. If there’s anything wrong with adding the acidity from pape fruit, everything will be ruined. But that part is completely satisfying.

In that case, the rest is just to bake a pastry using this ingredient.

First, I boil some water and add kudzu starch into it. The water turns white, but it becomes more transparent as it’s being heated up continuously.

“I’m adding the syrup from the compote here.”

It’s to add sweetness and fragrance. There’s already a gentle sweetness from kudzu.

It's all right to add the sweetness in moderation.

I turn off the heat right after it's stained with a translucent pale pink color.

"As expected from the 100% kudzu. The smoothness is different."

Kudzu is a high class item. The kudzu starch circulating in the market is made by adding sweet potato starch or something else into it. However, this is pure kudzu starch 100% made from kudzu. It's a luxury that can't be enjoyed on Earth.

Then, my pastry is something that can't show the umami if not using this 100% pure kudzu. I carefully pour the dissolved kudzu onto the stone board I previously created with my earth magic arte. This board was created yesterday, and has been continuously cooled down by Tina's ice. On the stone board, there are countless of ping pong ball-sized holes. On top of the half spheres, I fill half of it with kudzu. After all the holes are filled with kudzu, I cover the stone board with cloth.

"Now, it should be better than I thought."

While waiting for the kudzu to become firm, I peel raw pinal fruit's skin and slice them. The compoted pinal fruit is indeed more delicious than the raw fruit. However, the raw fruit also has its advantages. My pastry will make good use of the flavors from them both.

When I finish slicing the necessary amount of pinal skin, it's right on time to uncover the cloth from the stone board to check it out. The kudzu has become nice and firm. Because I added more water before, its color is completely transparent that I can see the stone color beneath it.

First, I put pinal fruit compote into it, then adding raw pinal on top of it. Finally, I pour more dissolved kudzu into the half sphere until it's full.

Then I cover it again with the cloth. With this, all that's left is to wait as the pastry is done.

What I'm making is the pastry that will showcase the utmost limit of the ingredients, mizu mochi. Pastries using fruits are the most delicious without many additions.

I sit on a chair, then wait for the completion of the pastry.

“Kurt-sama, breakfast is ready.”

“Everyone is waiting, you know?”

Tina and Chloe come to fetch me.

Before I leave, let’s take a look at the pastry. The kudzu is completely firm now.

“Yeah, I’m going. The pastry is finished too.”

So I shall go back. The moment I think like that, though, the two of them look highly spirited.

“Kurt-sama, so the pastry is done!”

“Show me, Kurt. I’ve been curious since yesterday!”

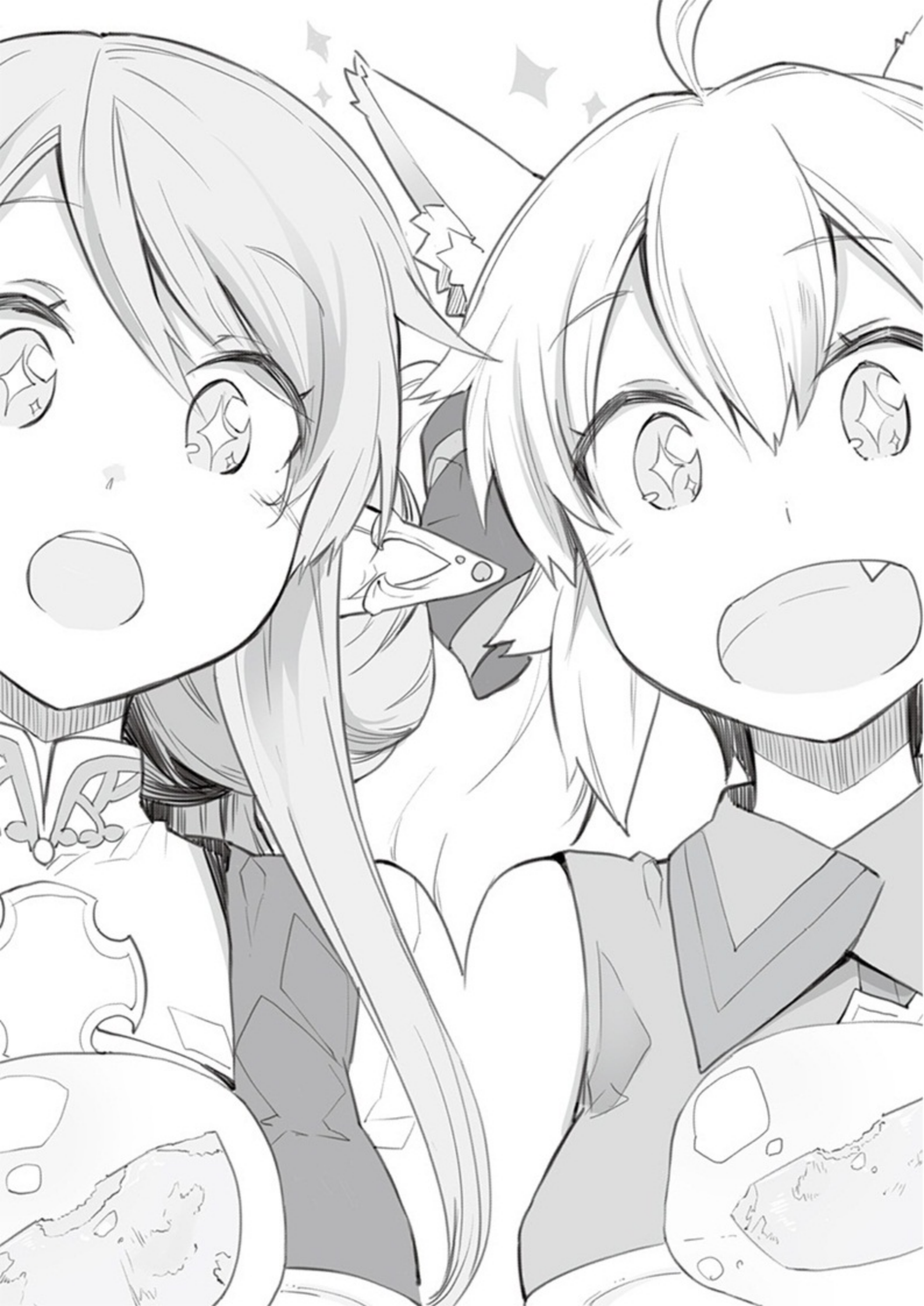
Such an amazing pressure. I just took a look at it, but this is out of my control.

“It cannot be helped then. This is my pastry.”

I fetch a plate and take out just two of them from the mold. Then I put the pastry onto the plate. When the half-sphere pastry is on top of the plate, it wriggles.

“*Uwaa*, so pretty.”

“This is the first time I’ve seen it. Amazing, it’s transparent and wiggling.”



My pastry is a beauty, just like these two girls said. The pale pink translucent kudzu skin wraps around the vibrant pink pinal compote. It's like a jewel inside a crystal. And that crystal is wiggling from the tiniest vibrations.

It's a western pastry with *kudzu sakura* reference, a Japanese pastry where a red bean pastry filling is wrapped in kudzu skin.

The outer skin is soft due to the maximum amount of water content, allowing the transparency, and the center filling is fruit compote. For the sake of making it more full-bodied, I added the compote syrup into the kudzu skin.

It's a simple pastry, but balancing the ingredients' distribution is extremely difficult.

If the water is too little, it will harden. If it's too much, it will collapse. Without reaching that utmost limit, it cannot be made.

"Come one, you too. It's okay to eat."

They're admiring the pastry without eating them, so I prompt them.

"This is too pretty, it's too wasteful to eat."

"Right? It's like precious jewel, so."

Even while saying so, the spoons that I handed to them are reaching the pastry now.

The moment Tina's spoon touches it, it's wobbling. She then put more strength into it, and the spoon smoothly slides in. The compoted peach breaks apart easily. Tina brings the spoon to her mouth and hold it in.

"Mmmmm, mmmmmm♪"

Tina's fox ears point up, while her tail is buzzing.

Yosh, it's a grand success. It's the reaction when Tina is eating something truly delicious.

On her side, Chloe is also blankly bringing the pastry into her mouth.

"Amazing. This pastry. It's jiggling but when I put it in my mouth, it's springy, but it

also disappears like snow.”

“Only kudzu can make something like this, you know.”

Kudzu’s particle is extremely fine. That’s exactly why this smooth, voluptuous texture definitely can’t be found in any other ingredients. The springy texture and the smooth sensation is something unique to kudzu. It’s the texture that can only be drawn out of the purest 100% kudzu starch.

“This is amazing, I’m amazed with the texture, but the skin is lightly sweet. When I bite the pinal filling, a reaaally amazing syrup is overflowing, and they are mingling together. It’s been heated, so why can it give such a strong smell?”

“Along with the pinal compote that’s more delicious than raw, I also added a little bit of chopped raw pinal.”

That’s why I added the fresh pinal. The fragrance and overflowing juice. This is the fresh fruit’s advantage. This pastry showcases the advantages of both compote and fresh fruit.

“Amazing. Humans can make this terrific pastry.”

Chloe’s face turns red, while staring at me respectfully.

“It’s not humans who can make this. It’s because it’s Kurt-sama.”

Somehow, Tina stands proudly with a smug face.

“It seems the pastry is a huge success. Then let’s go back to the mansion. Everyone will be tired of waiting by now.”

“Ah, that’s right. We came here to call Kurt over.”

Chloe stands up in panic.

Tina also stands up while wiping the corner of her mouth. As if she just remembered, she popped a question.

“Oh, right. Kurt-sama, have you decided on the name of this pastry?”

“Un, I’ve decided. Light snow silk crepe.”

“.....Light snow. Melting endlessly in the mouth, it’s a perfect name for this pastry.

Tina is precisely reading my intention. The endlessly falling and refreshing coolness of a light snow is this pastry’s uniqueness. Also, the silk-like smooth texture of a crepe is the nuance of the latter half. Crepe has the nuance of a wrapping, so in the broadest sense, this pastry is a crepe.

Afterwards, while soothing Chloe’s grumbling, we return to the mansion and enjoy our breakfast.

Chapter 26

Even If I Lie

After I finished breakfast, I went to the kitchen for the second time.

Chloe, who accompanied Colt the chief, has already gone for preparing the construction. They're extremely busy arranging the villagers' gathering under the pretext of offering a mass prayer to end the disease in the afternoon today.

My part is to check the amount of pastries. I must make around 200 portions.

Light Snow Silk Crepes are being made all at once by pouring into the stone board. Truth be told, this pastry is made not just to treat everyone as a medicine, I also put the possibility of selling it in Margrave Fernande's territory into consideration. It's a highly original and incredibly delicious pastry that can be produced in large numbers, using kudzu as the ingredient that no one has ever seen before. There's no way it won't sell well.

However, since it won't last long, I'm going to have to go to the store and make it there personally. It won't be a regular product, but a special limited once a month menu. There should be that way of selling too.

"Kurt-sama, I've brought a lot."

"Thanks, Tina."

I asked Tina to bring a lot of broad leaf bamboo grass (*sasa*).

"What are you going to use these for?"

"A substitution for plates. As expected, there are not enough plates for two hundred people, and they can't just be handed over by hand."

The *sasa* is washed with water, and the Light Snow Silk Crepe is put on top of it.

"It's really pretty. Placing it on top of *sasa* leaf makes it look more delicious than being

put on a plate.”

“There’s a good balance between the translucent pastry and sasa. Besides, the scents won’t clash. Moreover, sasa won’t decay and it also has the effect on defeating the source of illness.”

In Japan, there’s a culture of wrapping *mochi* and *sushi* in sasa, because it has the benefit of making the food long lasting, other than due to the appearance and convenience.

One by one, the sasa leaves are lined up on top of the tray I created using earth magic arte, then the Light Snow Silk Crepes are placed on them.

“Kurt-sama, I’m helping too.”

Tina starts helping out. She washes the sasa and lines them up on the tray, so I can focus on placing the Light Snow Silk Crepes on them.

“It’ll be good if everyone eats Kurt-sama’s pastry.”

“You’re right. Let’s believe it’ll happen.”

With that, the two of us continue the work in silence.



After finishing the preparation step, we left the kitchen with the trays. We’re delivering the pastries. While going to the pastry’s storage area that Colt told us beforehand, my eyes caught sight of the altar installed at the center of the village.

It makes me think of huge campfire, the way those wooden frames are being arranged. They’ll probably use fire. Sparing a sidelong glance for them, we deliver the pastry to a building that’s an arm away from the plaza. It’s covered with damp cloth so that it won’t be exposed to sunlight. There are water jugs filled with plenty of water nearby. It’ll prevent dryness and preserve the coolness.

After making round trips, we’ve delivered all the pastries and met up with Colt and the others to sync our awareness.



The day yields to the afternoon; it's finally the prayer time. All the present villagers are gathering in the central plaza of the village. Tina and I are watching from the corner of the plaza.

On the raised platform, Colt explains the current state of the disease's spread, then he signals the beginning of the prayer. The altar arranged at the center of the plaza is thick with flames. The elves around it are offering prayers similar to Buddhist prayers while being clad in white *hakama*. Around them, all the villagers who aren't sick from the disease are praying. Everyone wears a serious face. Most likely, they don't really think that the disease matter will be solved by praying either. But even so, this is the only thing they can do. They're cornered to this extent.

"Kurt-sama."

Tina squeezed my hand. She can feel the unusual unease and helplessness in the air.

"It'll be all right. I will figure it out."

I squeeze her hand back. It makes her smile.

After the prayer ends, it'll be my turn at last.

For Tina, for Colt, for Chloe, there's absolutely no room for failure.



After a while, the prayer ends. Colt ascends the platform for the second time.

"Everyone, thank you for taking the time to come in this busy hour. I wish that your prayers will reach the heavens as well."

Colt's voice resound in the vicinity. His voice shows his sincerity in his wish. That feeling seems to reach the villagers as well, because they're making docile expressions.

"In this place, there is something that I wish to tell you. Already many of you know this, but my daughter, Culrina, who left this village with a human, has passed away. She seems to have been defeated by disease. The same disease that took the life of the

human who took Culrina with him.”

The villagers who heard those words were visibly shaken; their faces darkened. Tina’s mother should be a popular person adored by this village.

“Also, Culrina has brought a child into this world. My grandchild. Her daughter’s name is Tina. She’s born as a Lunar, and looks like the spitting image of Culrina. That Tina has come to this village. Let me introduce her at this place, along with another person who came with her.”

The villagers made a larger commotion. Then, Tina and I climb to the platform. From the side, she looks like Culrina. She’s an exact resemblance. Or so what everyone is whispering about.

First, Tina starts to speak.

“Nice to meet you. I’m called Tina. I’m very happy to be able to come to my mother’s hometown. To me, she told me a lot of things about the spirit village. It’s a place of joy, a great place. I’m very sad that a disease has stricken a village that wonderful.”

Tina conceals her face. She truly feels sad. And it’s because she’s sincere that her feelings can reach the villagers.

After pausing for a while, she speaks again.

“The truth is, my objective to come to this village isn’t to visit my mother’s hometown. Chloe left the village in order to borrow the strength of a human doctor to save the village, and she had a fateful encounter with Kurt-sama, who is beside me. Kurt-sama took care of me when I was lost on the roadside after losing both of my parents, and hired me as his servant. To help Kurt-sama as his assistant, I came to this village.”

As the story changes course, the villagers become baffled. Tina continues in the middle of that.

“Kurt-sama came to this village in order to cure the disease of the village. However, his medical treatment was rejected because this village couldn’t borrow a human’s strength. If it’s Kurt-sama, he can definitely cure the illness. I wish, you will accept Kurt-sama’s treatment. Please.”

Tina lowers her head. However, the reactions from the villagers are bad. I can pick up

the voices by strengthening my hearing range with mana.

[A human doctor?]

[If he truly can heal the illness, if it's true...]

[It has to be a lie. There's no one in the village who can do anything about it.]

[It's unthinkable to borrow a human's strength.]

[Hear, hear. I'd rather die before I'd throw away my pride.]

[But, if he can save nee-chan, even if he's human, then]

The negative opinions, those who doubt me, make up more than half of the crowd. Very rarely, there are voices who express their willingness to borrow my strength even if I am human.

Well, it's as I imagined. It's difficult to make them accept medical treatment through a frontal attack.

"Tina, it's okay. You've done well."

I grasp Tina's shoulder while saying that.

"Kurt-sama."

"It's all right. Leave the rest to me."

Tina has done her part really well. From now on, it's my responsibility.

"Nice to meet you. I am Kurt • Arnold. I'm a human doctor. I came to this village upon Chloe's request. Let me tell you something first. As Tina said earlier, I could definitely cure this illness."

I strongly assert my words. There's a larger commotion than before, then all their interest is pointed at me all at once.

"However, regretfully, I was told that you wouldn't borrow a human's strength, and I couldn't lend my hand. To protect that rule, I am told that those who have the

resolution to be banished from the village can be healed. After this, please state it if you intend to do so. You don't have to worry after being banished from the village either. It's in a human village, but I'll prepare the place for you to live and work. This has gone through your village head's, Colt's approval."

This is the precaution if the pastry does fail. In the event that the pastry still cannot persuade everyone, I informed them that I'll still save them, at the very least.

"I want to save lives. However, I'm not allowed to. To be honest, my heart is torn apart... I have the power to save you, but I can only watch the residents of this village die. It makes me feel miserable and helpless."

Like how Tina did it, I show them the sincerity in my words. No matter how small it is, if it can make them trust me.

"That's why, at the very least, for the sake of all the villagers here, I wish to do what I can. I am a doctor, as well as a pastry chef. Using the ingredients in this village, I made a pastry that none of you has ever seen before. I wish to present this pastry to you. After presenting the pastry, I'll be violating the village's rule and thus will leave this village along with those who wish to get my medical treatment even if they have to be banished from the village. I'm sorry, that I cannot do anything other than this."

I lower my head.

The villagers are looking at me with complicated expression. It seems that at least they have let their guard down, more or less.

"Everyone, Kurt's pastry is truly delicious. That's why, please, eat them."

A strikingly cheerful voice resounds. It's Chloe.

She appears on the platform out of nowhere. In her hand, there's a Light Snow Silk Crepe that has been placed on sasa. It's jiggling while being moved.

On top of that, Chloe scoops it with a spoon. The spoon sinks smoothly, then she brings it to her mouth. She starts chewing in a blink of an eye. She held her cheeks with her two hands, showing a happy expression.

"Yuuup, it's as delicious as I thought♪ It's the first time in my life I've ever eaten this kind of pastry."

Chloe showed with her whole body how delicious the pastry was. The villagers swallowed their drool soundly.

“Hey, everyone. We don’t know when we’ll fall sick. I think that we shouldn’t waste away this chance to eat the best pastry like this. Just accepting the pastry won’t break the rules of the village, right, Colt-ojisan?”

“Yes, that’s right. It’s not included in the rules.”

“Hear that? Ah, but if you won’t eat it, I’ll be eating everyone’s portion.”

Chloe’s words are making fun of them, and the villagers come to their decisions.

“We’ll eat too.”

“As if we’ll let Chloe eat all of that delicious-looking thing.”

Then, they come this way. I smile bitterly, step down from the platform, then bring over the Light Snow Silk Crep on the sasa. Just like our planned arrangement, I bring that to the table and start distributing them.

“Here you go.”

“Oniichan, thank you.”

While handing over the Light Snow Silk Crepes one by one, I secretly cast Heal on them without fail.

At first, there are a lot of villagers who look reserved, but as soon as there are more folks who start eating, their tension is loosened; the villagers put my pastry in their mouths. Then, my popularity shoots through the roof.

“Everyone, make a proper line.”

“This is the end of the line.”

Chloe and Tina help with arranging the line. It’s quite helpful. When the line surpasses one hundred, I start to let out cold sweat. Today, there are about a hundred and fifty folks in this place. It is the first time that I cast [Recovery] nonstop to this extent.

However, I can only endure. There's a meaning to cast it on every single one of them.

If I start to lose my consciousness. I'm, totally done for.

When I thought like that, I could feel warmth coming from my back. It's Tina's hand. She supports me. Just from that, I feel like I can work hard a little bit more. That's how I feel.

She probably came here because the line flowed smoothly that Chloe could handle it by herself.

Just, a bit, more. Let's sprint to the finish line.



After a while, finally, the Light Snow Silk Crepes are finished being distributed.

"What's this, it's jiggling?"

"It's slippery, it's plump, it's sticking to my mouth."

"But, it's not sticky at all. When I bite into it, the plumpness feel so good."

"Not just the texture, the taste is great too. So pinal can taste this good."

"I can taste papple too. And rice wine too."

"It's the first time I ate it, but I feel the taste is so familiar."

"This transparent skin, how is it made, really? Wish he could teach me."

The spirit village's residents spoke in admiration one after another.

Because it's a small pastry, one by one, the Light Snow Silk Crepes are disappearing. Even those who have tasted just a tiny bit can't hold back anymore and simultaneously start following the people around them who have been savoring the delicious food.

All of the villagers finish eating the Light Snow Silk Crepes.

With this, the first hurdle has been passed.

I step onto the platform. Now, let's throw the bomb.

"Everyone, thank you for eating while showing how delicious my pastry is. Seeing it makes making it all worthwhile."

Being asked that question, one by one the positive responses rise up. It's delicious. Thank you. They reply with those words.

"I'm really happy to hear those words. This pastry is named Light Snow Silk Crepe. I made it with love."

Then I cut my sentence. I speak again at the timing of grabbing their most attention.

"Then, I have to ask forgiveness from everyone. This pastry isn't just a pastry. It's medicine. With this, I've medically treated everyone in this place. Sorry for making you break the rules."

In an instant, silence falls down. Then, great noise dominates the area.

Chapter 27

Quite An Escape Route

Because of the words flying out of my mouth, they cry in anguish and roar in anger. I am pierced with so many dangerous stares. It seems like I'll be beaten up anytime.

In summary, it goes according to my assumption.

"Silence!"

Colt shouts out. He came to my side as soon as the commotion began. Chloe is here too.

Just with that, the crowd is hushed.

"But, chief, this guy tricked all of us!"

"Hear, hear! We can't forgive this kind of thing!"

"We ate them because he said it was a delicious pastry."

"To begin with, did you know about that?"

The commotion is heating up again in an instant. However, Colt doesn't flinch.

"Yeah, I knew of it. Not only that, I also helped him out. Among us, there are those who have been infected by the disease, even if it's light. How are you feeling right now?"

The villagers look into each other's face. The villagers who have already been infected but not bedridden yet are in this place too. Among them, there's a girl with fox ears who speaks up.

"My body became lighter. All the things that I suffered feels like a lie now."

"Me too. It was hard for me to even stand up before."

“Me too, me too.”

One by one, those who have their bodies cured speak up.

“You should understand now. Kurt’s power is real. That’s why I asked for his help. Come here, Aloe.”

Upon Colt’s request, a beautiful elf appears. She’s Chloe’s mother, the first elf that I healed in this village.

“Long time no see. I think all of you here already knew that I was bedridden and suffering heavily from this illness. However, just as you can see, I’m very lively... It’s because I received Kurt-san’s treatment one step ahead of you.”

Those words transmitted a huge stir in the area.

There’s no persuasiveness in telling them that I can heal the illness with just words. It’s better to show them the perfect example in this way. I want to show them, not only those mildly sick in this place, but also the patient who was on the verge of death, Aloe.

“That’s not all. I shivered when I heard the details of the disease. This disease is way more dangerous than we could possibly imagine.”

Aloe looked in my direction. She must have signaled me to start the explanation. So I explained the disease here.

1. It cannot be healed on its own
2. I’m the only one who can produce the medicine
3. The incubation period is long, even if it doesn’t look that way, there’s a high chance that everyone has already been infected
4. It spreads through coughs
5. Even if a single sick person remains, the disease will continue to spread

The area is enveloped by despair. It seems that all of them believed in what I just told them.

After waiting for the villagers' understanding, Colt speaks up.

"That is precisely why I made everyone eat Kurt's pastry, albeit forcibly... Also, from now on, we'll let the bedridden patients eat them as well. The village is on the brink of destruction. The tradition is precious. However, this is not the time nor place to talk about it. If there's a single sick person left, the village will perish."

Everyone could feel the dread emanating from the words of the village's destruction. They probably thought that the disease would disappear someday on its own. They all came to think so.

Without anyone realizing it, Chloe has stepped forward on the platform. She stands beside her mother, Aloe.

"Hey, everyone. Is it that important to refuse a human's help? Is the village's customs more precious than lives? I, for one, don't think that way. My mother's life is precious. Everyone's life is precious... I violated the custom and borrowed Kurt's help. That's why, I will leave the village and live in Kurt's village. I'll be happier that way."

Chloe calls out with tears running down her face.

"Hey, please wake up. I'll say it one more time. If there's a single person left with this disease, this village will perish. Even those who want to live through a human's help will also die. Even those who are still healthy will die. Even though Kurt has cured us, even though he has helped not only me, but everyone in the village... Hey, please truly think about it."

Chloe's eyes and the villagers' reflect back and forth. Little by little, the opinion is tipped over to borrow my help. The biggest reason is that it involves others. Their stubbornness will kill their fellows. That truth must have been too heavy.

Let's give the last push.

"I'm not a resident of this village, so I can't understand the heaviness of the rules. However, I understand the heaviness of a life. Are you really putting everyone's life on the same scale with the pride of the spirit village? That pride, is it more precious than your spouses, your children, your brothers, your lovers, and your friends?"

There's no way it can be.

Everyone has someone precious. Just like how I think Tina is more precious to me than anything.

“If even that cannot give you determination, how about thinking of it in another way? This talk becomes difficult because it’s about receiving medical treatment. So let’s say everyone is suddenly healed after eating a delicious pastry. Because the pastry is delicious, you want to give it to the sick patients who cannot come to this village. Think about it that way?”

Huuh? Everyone’s eyes which seem to cry with that kind of voice are all gathering at me.

“The pastry is delicious, right?”

No one shakes their head to deny that question.

“In that case, don’t you think that you want the sick people to eat it too, now? That’s a gentle pastry that even the sick can eat.”

Both the kudzu and the peach are easy to digest. It will be delicious and easily consumed by even the sick.

The villagers face each other in unison. To begin with, they have already received the medical treatment. If this large number of villagers are considered to violate the rules, the village will be uninhabited. Then, with that fair reasoning, they prepared to take the escape route.

“Will you allow me to go and serve the delicious pastry to those who are sick?”

All that’s left, is,

“””We’ll be under your care!”””

Simply this.



Afterwards, I took a little nap to regenerate my mana, then I made my rounds to visit each and every patient in their houses. In that way, when I handed over the Light Snow Silk Crepes, I could do the [Recovery] operation over and over again.

When the sun went down, I already visited all of the houses, finally.

I'm deathly tired. I feel like I've casted a lifetime's worth of [Recovery].

My power can save a lot of people's lives, though. I'm also happy that I can see how delighted they are when enjoying my pastry.

Returning to the room I borrowed, I crash on the bed as soon as I arrive.

"Thank you for your hard work. Kurt-sama, have a good night's sleep."

I received those words from Tina. Then I bury my face in Tina's chest. I feel terribly content. While feeling content, I slowly close my eyes.

Epilogue

The Return

“Kurt, thank you, for saving this village. I sincerely thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

The next day, Colt and I stand in front of his mansion and face each other. He faintly smiles. Other than us, Tina and Chloe are here as well.

“I just did the labor for the sake of obtaining the best fruits, as a pastry chef, as well as for Tina’s sake. Besides, I couldn’t save anyone with just my power. Without your determination and support, we would still be in a deadlock.”

That’s not humility speaking, I truly feel that way. I could put it into practice, only because Colt came to the rescue.

“Even so, thank you. As I promised, I’ll send over a tenth of a year’s worth of harvested products from this village every year.”

I scratch my neck. I feel like he just said something weird, actually...

“A tenth of pinal fruit, right?”

“Don’t tell me you thought that I’m that petty? It’s a tenth of all the food products in this village. Papple, Ramama, Yona... and other things grown in this village, all of them will be sent over to you. And the weed you called “kudzu”, you can carry as much as you like.”

Papple is the grape-like fruit, Ramama is the rice-like plant. It’s the first time I heard about Yona, but, it must have been just as wonderful as the others. They’ll certainly become the weapons in my pastry export.

“It’s an incredibly attractive offer for me, but is it really all right?”

Strictly speaking, there’s a lot of things to receive. So much that I feel guilty over it.

“Since they’re the portions that will only turn into fertilizer, there’s no problem. With the water from elven magic arte, the harvest is always plenty.”

It’s the surprising advantage of having a steady supply of water to grow the agriculture, but to achieve that kind of result. I’m quite jealous.

“Then, I’ll gratefully accept them. It’s only that I feel that I’m receiving too much, so I’ll be sending over some products this way too. The spirit village has a lot of wonderful products, but there are many wonderful things in human towns as well.”

“Yes, I’ll be looking forward to it. Delicious pastries are good too. That transparent pastry that you made, Kurt, is the most delicious thing I’ve ever tasted.”

“To be told to that extent, I’m really happy. Next time, I’ll be treating you to other different pastries.”

Our eyes meet and we laugh. It’s about time to depart. I feel reluctant, but it’s time to end the talk.

“Kurt, you’re going now, right? It’s okay to stay around for a while, though?”

“It’s not possible for me to do that. I also have my own territory to look after.”

I’ve been absent from my village for a while.

There are things I’m worried about. We have to prepare for winter, and I need to arrange the real export of the pastries. Other than inventing the recipes, I need to do all sorts of things from laying the groundwork for Marquis Fernandes’ previous arrangement and other things. I have to do them before the snow starts piling up, making it impossible to cross the mountain.

“I see, such a pity. I’d have like to show our gratitude in a huge celebration, initially.”

“I’m happy to receive such feelings. When the opportunity arises, perhaps.”

My talk with Colt thus ended.

Before setting off from the spirit village, I should confirm it one last time.

“...Tina, is it really okay?”

I ask Tina at my side.

I already talked about it with Tina yesterday, but I wanted to know about it in this place too.

“Yes. I’m returning to Arnold with Kurt-sama. I think that this village is a great place too. But I am Kurt-sama’s partner, my home is in that village.”

Tina looks bashful.

If Tina wished so, I told her that it was all right for her to stay in this village. She has blood relatives, and it’s a prosperous village. She’ll be happy.

However, Tina chose to be by my side.

“Thank you. Tina.”

“What’s there to be thanked for? I’m just, I wish to be together with Kurt-sama.”

Flustered, Tina’s face turns red.

She’s determined to choose me. I absolutely have to make her happy.

“Chloe, you too, is it okay? You don’t have to push yourself for nothing.”

“It’s not for nothing, not at all. The others [only want to eat pastry]. But, from the start, I’m the one who invited Kurt here as the doctor, and asked you to cure my mother. No matter how I looked at it, I’ve broken the rules. That’s why it’s natural for me to leave the village.”

Chloe says so with a cheerful voice.

“I wronged you, it seems. Sorry to make you lose your village.”

If I was a bit more careful, Chloe wouldn’t have to leave the village at all.

“H, hold on for a second. I’m kidding, I’m just kidding. It’s not because I broke the rules or anything, really. Colt-ojisan said that it would be good to have an intermediary person with Kurt, so I stepped forward as the candidate. I’m going only because I want to go! You see, now I can eat more delicious pastries than the ones in the spirit village!”

With a faint blush on her cheeks, she goes on and on in her fast speech.

It makes me feel a bit relieved. I don't really like the thought of forcing someone.

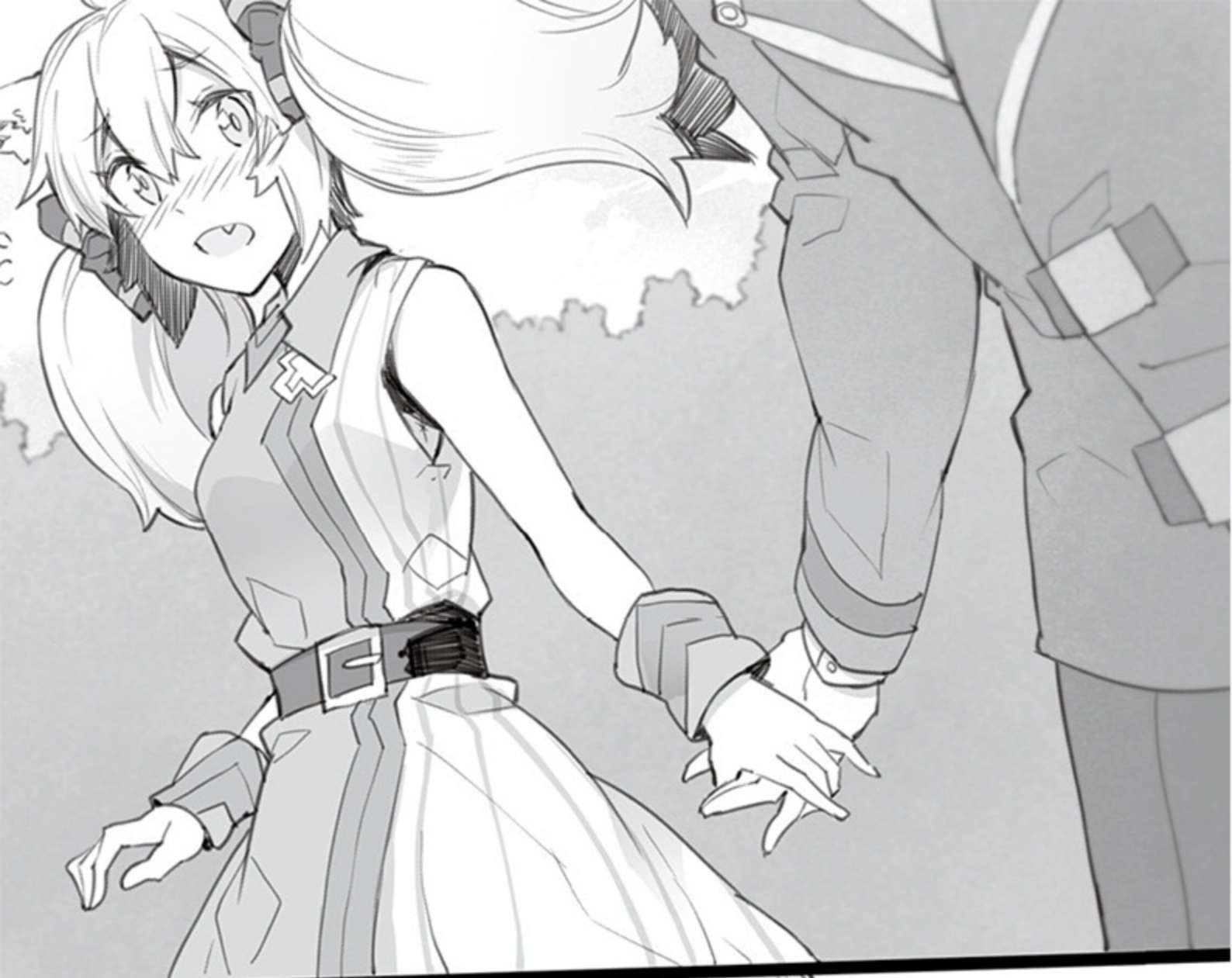
Having Chloe with us is a huge help. To procure a long term supply of the fruits, having a mediator is indispensable. Besides, Chloe's water magic arte is useful in various things. There'll be circumstances when I'm going to need her help.

Tina grabs my hand and squeezes it tight while looking at Chloe.

"I won't give him." She whispered so.

"Ahaha."

Chloe dryly laughs while having cold sweat.



I put my hand on Tina's head and pat her in any case, making her eyes narrow in glee.



And the time to depart finally arrived.

We've already packed our belongings. There are many young elves and lunars from the spirit village here. Those are the personnel arranged by Colt. They all carry a huge basket on their backs with lots of fruit inside. The three of us can't possibly bring all those fruits, so we have them to take care of it. Furthermore, it seems that they'll stay with Chloe in Arnold for a while. According to Colt, they are obedient and hard working.

Up to the spirit village's gate, there are many villagers around.

In terms on giving them the medical treatment, I've been forceful. It wouldn't be strange if there are villagers who resent me.

They open their mouths. I put myself on guard, a bit.

However, the words they actually speak out...

"Thank you, niichan."

"The pastry was delicious."

"You saved us. You're our life's benefactor."

One by one, they shower me with warmth in their words. I feel my eyes stinging hotly.

"Bring this with you, it's the rice wine that I brewed."

"This is jerky that's just been nicely dried. Bring it as a present to Kurt's village."

"These are first class pinal. You won't see any pinal in the village that can top these."

"Our cheese is a masterpiece!"

One by one, they shove their small presents to me.

The rice wine, the wild boar jerky. A remarkably huge pinal. Delicious-looking cheese bundle. And other things.

My luggage is piling up into a mountain.

I'm glad. I could properly convey my feelings to them.

I had to politely refuse the things that I cannot carry with my hands. Then, until they are out of my sight, I keep walking while looking in their direction.

"I'll definitely come back! At that time, I'll treat you to other delicious pastries, okay!" I shouted.

By no means will I come with the excuse of saving the village again.

I vow to do so from the bottom of my heart. I'll definitely come again. Next time, let's let them enjoy a simply delicious pastry without any medicine nonsense.

From the village, I could hear words—we're waiting, you absolutely have to—among others.

With that, my journey in the spirit village has come to an end. In this village, I obtained my pastry ingredients as well as lots of more wonderful things.

I'm glad that I came here. I truly think so from the bottom of my heart.



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